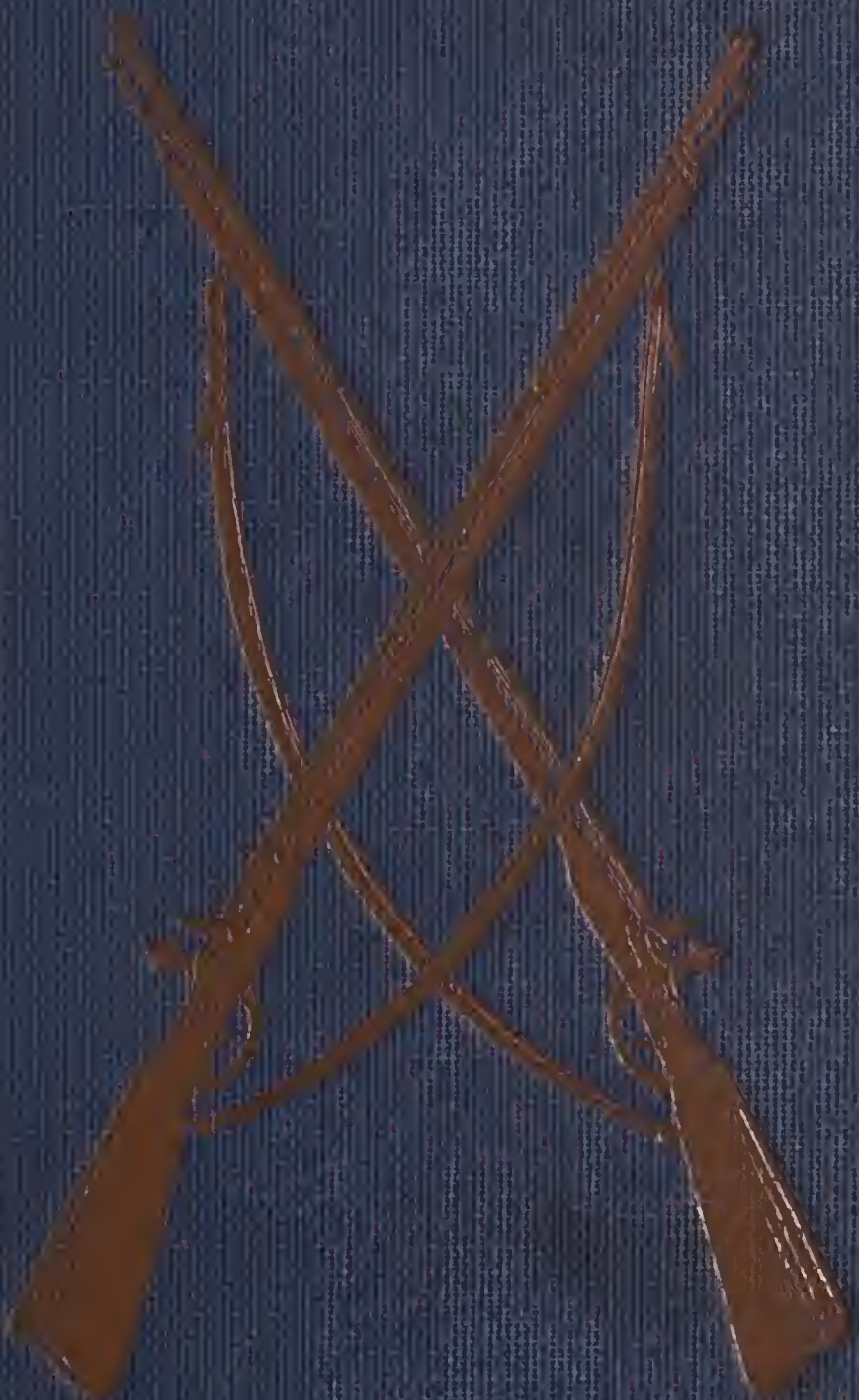
PIONEER SCOUTS OF THE OHIO



EVERETT T. TOMLINSON

PIONEER SCOUTS OF THE OHIO

By EVERETT T. TOMLINSON

SCOUTING ON THE OLD FRONTIER

STORIES OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

SCOUTING WITH MAD ANTHONY

THE MYSTERIOUS RIFLEMAN

SCOUTING ON THE BORDER

THE PURSUIT OF THE APACHE CHIEF

THE TRAIL OF THE MOHAWK CHIEF

YOUNG PEOPLE'S HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

PLACES YOUNG AMERICANS WANT TO KNOW

FIGHTERS YOUNG AMERICANS WANT TO KNOW

THE STORY OF GENERAL PERSHING

"They're gaining now, Phin."

[page 112]

AMERICAN SCOUTING SERIES

PIONEER SCOUTS OF THE OHIO

BY

EVERETT T. TOMLINSON

AUTHOR OF "SCOUTING IN THE WILDERNESS," "YOUNG PEOPLE'S HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION," ETC.

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PREFACE

The story of the retreating frontier is one that never grows old. The romance of pioneer days, when the hardy people steadily pushed their way westward and founded new homes or felled the forests and developed their farms, shows how much better they builded than they knew. At the present time there is a fresh and renewed interest in all the romance of the pioneer period. The qualities that were demanded then were not different from those required in every age and place to win success. Courage in meeting difficulty and danger, the willingness to endure hardships, the enterprise which was a necessary condition in leaving the old and founding the new, the facing of continual peril from wild beasts and Indians, to say nothing of that which came from the primitive conditions, the resourcefulness that was perpetual in its demand,—all are qualities that to-day mark the successful man just as they did in the days long past.

The story of their journeys and of the experiences through which they passed is far

more fascinating than is the story which is purely fictitious. All the incidents incorporated in this tale are true. The writer has found them in the earlier records of Ohio. He has tried to present them in a story form that not only may interest his young readers but would also lead them on to further investigations of their own.

The heritage of the American boy and girl in the deeds of their heroic ancestors is one that should not likely be cast aside and should be known to all.

It is true also that the same qualifications that were necessary to found the new homes and to traverse and open the wilderness are not unlike those which are necessary to preserve the same homes which they established but which have come down to us. Indeed the writer is sometimes prone to think that greater heroism is required in preserving such a heritage than in originally establishing it. At all events, if the writer's efforts to interest his readers and to induce them to place a proper valuation upon their heritage of which every young American should be proud, his labors will not have been in vain.

Everett T. Tomlinson

Elizabeth
New Jersey

CONTENTS

CONTENTS

PIONEER SCOUTS OF THE OHIO

PIONEER SCOUTS OF THE OHIO

CHAPTER I

THE TROT LINE

"TAKE hold here and help."

"I am taking hold! I'm doing my best. We must have six whales on this trot line."

"Well, haul away! I'm doing my part."

Silence followed the brief conversation, while Ichabod and Benjamin Taylor bent to their task on the shore of the Muskingum River. The hour was early in the morning in a late October day in 1791. In the preceding evening the two brothers had carefully arranged their trot line and left it for the night in the water. This morning, when they rushed to the bank to discover what success their efforts had won, they were both excited when it speedily became evident that this time there was no question that a large number of fish had been hooked.

The trot line, consisting of one long line, to which various short lines with hooks had been attached, had all been baited before the long line had been carried far out into the river and anchored and left for the night.

This was a common method of fishing in the busy days of the early pioneers in southern Ohio. The streams abounded in fish, but so many were the tasks of the settlers and so hard the life they lived that fishing as a sport was a rare diversion. On the other hand, the food which the rivers and streams so easily provided must be had and trot lines provided one of the easiest and not the least successful methods of catching the fish that abounded in these waters.

Ich and Ben, as the brothers were commonly known, had placed their rifles near by on the shore, ready for quick use. The times were troublesome, for the Indians had no welcome for the whites who were steadily encroaching upon their inherited territory. Then, too, the British and the Canadians were jealous over the boundary line of the newly formed United States of America. The citizens of this latter country were by no means willing that the Ohio River should form this boundary, for they believed that much of the country far beyond its shores by right belonged to the sturdy people

who had so recently won their independence.

Ben and Ich Taylor in the preceding year had come with their father and their elder brother Phineas, and settled on a grant from the Ohio Company along the rich bottoms of the Muskingum River. So fertile had been the soil and so free was it from the growth of heavy timbers that were plainly to be seen farther back from the waters, that they had not even been compelled to clear their land of stumps. Mr. Taylor and his three sons had set fire to the brush that grew near the banks and, because there were not many roots of dead bushes left in the dark rich soil, they had not even gone to the labor of plowing. With heavy hoes they had dug holes in the soft ground and planted their grain and also the few seeds of vegetables they had brought with them in their slow journey across the Allegheny Mountains.

The crops of the second year had already been harvested. Among the few scattered settlers in the vicinity, and any one who dwelt within twenty miles was called a "neighbor," there was surprise at the abundance which had rewarded the labors of the four men who dwelt in the little log house, the home of Phin, Ich and Ben Taylor and their father.

Their mother, unable to endure the hardships of the long and slow journey from Massachu-

setts, had died before the family had crossed Pennsylvania. Her death, although it was a source of deep sorrow to her family, had not caused either Mr. Taylor or his boys to abandon their project to obtain a new home in the promised land of Ohio. The Ohio Company, to which reference already has been made, had been organized with the consent of the government and had purchased a vast extent of land which they were dividing among the settlers.

The land which Mr. Taylor and his boys obtained was perhaps the most fertile in that fertile region. They were counted among the more prosperous settlers, not only because of the rich soil of their section, but also because they had been so fortunate as to bring with them a yoke of oxen and two horses. Any settler who was the owner of four such animals was indeed wealthy in the eyes of his neighbors.

On this day when Ben and Ich had gone to the shore of the river to haul in their trot line, their father and their older brother Phin (who, having arrived at the mature age of eighteen, was already looked upon as one of the men of the region) had taken their two horses and set forth for the Salt Licks, as the Salt Springs were called. It was a long and difficult journey and the labor of obtaining salt may be un-

derstood from the fact that they were compelled to boil down eight hundred gallons of salt water in order to obtain fifty pounds of salt, and yet salt was a necessity and somehow must be had. For this purpose, these two pioneers had set forth on their difficult and dangerous expedition. The Indians were no more cordial to the whites who visited the Salt Springs, which they declared to be their own, than they were to all settlers who made their homes in the land which the Red Men believed they had inherited from their fathers.

During the absence of Mr. Taylor and Phin, the younger boys had been told to set the trot line and clean and prepare the fish they might obtain for drying and curing. In spite of the crops the problem of food, especially of meat, for the long and dreary winter, was one for which preparation must be made before the snow filled the hollows or the ice covered the streams.

"This is the biggest haul we've ever had!" shouted Ich in his excitement, as the water before them bubbled and boiled from the frantic movements of the fish and the weight of the heavy line steadily increased. Ben made no reply but renewed his exertions, as he braced himself and pulled harder upon the line.

Already some of the fish were clearly to be seen. Occasionally one broke above the surface of the water in a vain endeavor to escape. Relentlessly, however, the line was hauled ashore and at last the boys looked down upon the catch they had made.

There were fish of many kinds and sizes. Every one of the hooks which had been attached to the trot line held a victim. The living, squirming, struggling mass at last was hauled up on the shore and with a shout from Ich the two boys devoted themselves to the task of freeing their victims.

A blow from a stout club was administered to every fish when it was taken from the hook. Perhaps this was not done from motives of sympathy so much as because Big Joe, the hunter, had told them the flesh of a fish killed immediately after it was caught was always sweeter than of one which had been permitted to die a lingering, gasping death.

When at last the labors of the boys were ended they stood for a moment gazing with pride upon the mass of flopping fish before them.

"Here's a pike," exclaimed Ben, "which has swallowed a perch that had taken the bait on one of the lines! The greedy rascal is caught in his own trap."

"We'll soon attend to him. A pike will taste just as good next winter as a perch."

"Well, we've a fine job ahead of us. I don't mind catching the fish nearly as much as I do cleaning them."

"Before we do anything we ought to set that trot line again."

"You're right about that."

Eagerly the boys rebaited the short lines and then Ben, who was the older, having arrived at the mature age of seventeen and who naturally as a consequence looked to Ich to obey orders, told his brother to take the canoe, draw the line and its "bobs" out into the stream and once more drop the tempting mass into the Muskingum.

Returning to the shore he joined Ben as the latter was bending over a rough plank which had been placed on the ground. Upon this the fish one by one were placed and quickly beheaded, then scraped and cleaned in such a manner that only the flesh, white and clean, was left.

The fish, as fast as they were prepared for the process that awaited them, were cast into a wooden bucket partly filled with water.

When at last the task of cleaning their catch was completed, the two boys next devoted themselves to a thorough washing of the fish. The

flesh then was ready for the salt which Mr. Taylor and Phin were expected soon to provide.

After they had been sorted, the fish were partly skinned and dried in the sunlight and then stored away for use when winter came. Many catches must be made before the full supply for winter would be provided, for Mr. Taylor and his boys were generous to their less fortunate neighbors who had settled farther back from the river, and provided part of the fish and meat which would serve them as food when the hardy settlers were held in their cabins by the wintry storms.

"That river is full of fish," declared Ich, who was quick and impulsive in his manner of speech and very different from his more serious-minded older brother Ben.

The latter was short and fat. No amount of teasing ever served to ruffle Ben's temper, while Ich's temper required no ruffling at all. Apparently he held plenty of it on tap. Indeed, he had declared to his father that it was a mistake to say that he was always "losing" his temper when the fact was that he never "lost" it at all, for his temper was always with him. It was Ben who apparently had lost his temper, for he seldom displayed any signs of anger. Only once throughout their boyhood could Ich

recall a time when Ben had become so angry that he lost control of himself. That occasion, however, was one which Ich well remembered and caused him to be somewhat more guarded in his dealings with his brother than previously he had been.

And now it was Ben who was the undemonstrative, quiet leader and Ich who was very much like an audience that shouted its applause.

"Look yonder," exclaimed Ich suddenly, as he pointed toward the forest. "There comes Big Joe."

Big Joe, a young man about twenty-four years of age, was a well-known hunter throughout southern Ohio. He had never settled down to develop a section of land, for the call of the hunter and fisher was ever foremost in his interest. If he had a home anywhere in the region he had not told of its location. He was a frequent visitor at the Taylor cabin which he had helped to build. He had worked steadily, felling and shaping the timbers which the ox-team hauled to the bank of the river. Timbers only had been used in the construction of the little house and Big Joe, an expert in the task, had shown the newcomers how the logs were to be fitted and adjusted, and had shaped the few hickory "pins" which had been used to hold certain of the beams in place. When this task

had been completed Big Joe with his rifle had departed, very likely not to be seen again for many weeks.

He was a welcome visitor, however, whenever he felt moved to return. His sturdy frame, his skill as a marksman, his quiet manners, all combined to make him popular with the Taylors. He had taught each of the boys how to use his rifle and occasionally, on days never to be forgotten, had taken one of the lads in his canoe when he had "gone fishing."

His skill as a fisherman was not less than as a hunter. In recent months, Big Joe had seldom been seen in the cabin because the increasing troubles with the Indian tribes and the lack of success of the white soldiers in subduing them had greatly increased the peril of the pioneers. Blockhouses already had been erected in various places and from several of these spies or rangers went forth daily to scour the surrounding region in search of evidences of the presence of the dreaded Shawnees or Delawares.

In all there were seven tribes in the region, all of whom were bitterly opposing the encroachments by the whites and now were doubly dangerous because of their success in driving back the armed forces which had been sent to subdue them. The visit of Big Joe,

therefore, might be one to warn of peril or it might be simply a friendly call, if the hunter had obtained a day or two of release from his regular tasks.

Both Ben and his brother were silent as they watched the coming of Big Joe. The confidence and pride of both boys in the prowess of their visitor was manifest in the very manner with which they waited for him to draw near. Big Joe was dressed in deer skin. Leggings, lined with fringe, adorned each leg and his hat of coon skin increased the impression of his belonging to the whites.

Quietly the hunter drew near and bringing his rifle to the ground leaned forward and rested upon it as he looked keenly into the faces of his two young friends.

"Where's your dad?" he inquired brusquely, glancing quickly from one boy to the other.

"Gone for salt," spoke up Ich quickly.

"When'll he be back?"

" 'Most any time," said Ben.

"What's wrong?" demanded the younger boy. "Have you come to tell us that we must run for our lives the way you did the last time you were here? Are the redskins at their same old game?"

Ignoring the questions of the eager boy, the hunter glanced at the fish which the boys had

prepared for salting and said, "Get those on your trot line?"

"That's what we did!" spoke up Ich promptly. "And we've set it again."

The hunter said, "I got a big black cat the other day."

"What'd it weigh?" inquired Ich.

"Ninety-six pounds."

The "cat" was a catfish of which there were two varieties in the Muskingum and Ohio. One was known as the black cat and the other as the yellow. The black cat grew to be the larger, although catches of the yellow cats that weighed fifty to sixty pounds each were not uncommon. The weight of the black cat to which Big Joe referred was greater than any of which the pioneer boys had heard.

"What'd you say? How much?" demanded Ich quickly.

"I said ninety-six pounds," answered the hunter quietly. "That's what the steelyards showed."

"You must have stuffed it full of rocks and jammed in all the other fish you caught to make it weigh that much," laughed Ich.

"That was exactly what the fish weighed," replied Big Joe solemnly. "We didn't want to weigh the whole of Ohio."

"But ninety-six pounds! I don't believe I

weigh more than a hundred and thirty-five myself.''

''Probably not,'' replied the hunter dryly. ''The fish was most as big as you and a powerful sight stronger.''

Ben smiled as his brother flushed at the hunter's words and said, ''Tell us about it. Where'd you get it?''

''About five miles up the river,'' explained the hunter. ''I went out in a canoe, baited up and then let out my line and floated down the stream. I was dead tired because I'd been up two nights a-runnin'. Finally, when I didn't get a bite, I stretched out in the canoe after I had wound my fish line around my leg, and the first thing I knew, I went to sleep.''

''Ha! Ha!'' laughed Ich, ''I know the rest of the story. The big cat grabbed your hook and tipped over your canoe. When you saw him you probably thought he was the fish that came after Jonah.''

''No, that wasn't the way,'' continued the hunter quietly. ''I drifted, I don't know how long or how far, but I must have gone a mile or more and then all at once I had a tremendous yank on my left leg. You can believe me that I sat up pretty quick. At first I didn't know just what had happened but pretty soon it all came back to me and then I was in for a fight.

It took me more'n an hour to tire that big cat out. I let him work upstream and downstream, and pulled on him only when he'd go for the bottom and try to sulk there, then I'd let him know that I had hold of him and off he'd start again. He sure did give me a pretty sail. When I had him all tuckered out, I had worked my way pretty close in shore and when I saw I had him well hooked I landed him, but he did give me a fight."

"Do you suppose there are any more out there?" demanded Ich quickly.

"I suppose there be, though that's the biggest one I ever ketched. I don't know as I ever heard of a bigger."

"That's big enough," said Ben.

"No, sir," spoke up Ich. "When I go out I want to get the biggest one in the river. I'd like to show Phin when he comes back what I can do. He thinks just because he's eighteen years old and I am only fifteen that he's a big man and I am only a cub. I'd like to get a cat that weighs a hundred pounds."

The conversation was halted, however, as a prolonged scream of terror came from beyond the rude little log barn. The sound was repeated and, seizing their guns, the hunter and the two boys ran swiftly in the direction from which the startling sound had been heard.

CHAPTER II

THE HUNTER'S CATCH

"IT'S the hog-pen!" exclaimed Ich in an awed voice, as the speed of the runners increased.

"Yes, it's the hogs," acknowledged Ben, as he looked eagerly forward toward the place from which the terrifying squeals were heard.

The sounds were still rising and it was evident to all three that the animals were in mortal terror.

As the runners darted around the corner of the log barn the hog-pen was directly before them. Prowling around the pen were two lean, gaunt wolves. At the sight of the approaching men, one of the savage animals turned and baring its teeth snarled at the boys. The other wolf, instantly aware of its peril, turned quickly and like a streak of light darted into the nearby forest.

Big Joe quickly had brought his gun to his shoulder and fired. His example was instantly followed by the boys whose shots rang out together.

The nearer wolf, emitting one long howl, toppled to the ground and lay still.

"Look out for yourselves," warned the hunter as he cautiously approached the place where the beast was lying. "You never can tell about these fellows. Sometimes you think they're dead when they're really far from it."

A moment later when they drew near to the place where the wolf was lying, the hunter said, "He's dead. There isn't any question about that."

"We'll have to save his skin," said Ich excitedly. "What's the bounty now, Big Joe?"

"Four dollars for every pelt."

"That's an easy way to earn four dollars," laughed Ich in his excitement.

"The question is, who shot the wolf?" said the hunter dryly. "Let's look at him and see how many hit him."

An examination speedily revealed three wounds in the gaunt body. One rifle bullet had penetrated the skull, one had passed through the body, while the third showed that the wolf had been hit in the foreleg.

"We'd better skin the brute right away," suggested the hunter. "We've got plenty to do before the day is done."

The other wolf having fled, there was nothing to be gained by an attempt to follow it.

Accordingly, Big Joe and Ben, taking their knives, instantly began the task of skinning the dead wolf whose body was still warm. Meanwhile the hogs, of which there were six in the pen, had stopped their squealing and apparently were convinced that they were safe now that the hunter and the boys had come to their rescue.

"It's great," said Big Joe, as he drew back the pelt from the body of the wolf, "how those hogs will defend themselves sometimes when they are attacked in the open by the wolves."

"What'll they do?" inquired Ben.

"They'll form a circle," replied the hunter, "and put the weak fellows and the little ones inside and then the old ones will fight from the outside of the circle. They can put up a good fight, too. I saw a wolf not long ago that showed where its skin had been ripped for more than a foot by the tusks of some mad porker. Yes, sir, they put up a stiff fight. You boys ought to fix this pen so that it'll be wolf-tight."

"What do you mean?" inquired Ich. "What can we do?"

"You ought to put logs across the top of it. No wolf can scratch through these logs as they are here, but he can crawl up to the top and drop down inside and get just as many hogs

as he wants. You ought to put some logs across the top."

"That's what we'll do," said Ben. "Just as soon as we get through with our fish we'll attend to it."

"It's strange how all the varmints seem to take to the hogs. Last winter I followed the track of a painter that had lifted a big hog and carried it so that the body didn't once touch the snow for more than three hundred feet."

"What do you mean?" demanded Ich.

"Well, I mean that he just held the hog up in his jaws and didn't drag the body at all."

"I knew they were fearfully strong but I didn't believe that they could take a hog and carry it without dragging it."

"This fellow did," explained the hunter, "and the porker must have weighed one hundred seventy-five pounds."

"Did you see it?" inquired Ben.

"Yes, as I was telling yo', I found the porker where the painter had hidden him. He dug in the snow which was about six inches deep and made a hole right near a log, then he covered up the carcass and left it, expecting to come back for it when he was a little hungrier than he happened to be at that time. But two of us got on his trail, found him covered in a

big oak tree and shot him while he was crouching on one of the long branches."

"I'd like to shoot a painter," exclaimed Ben excitedly.

"Maybe you will some day," said the hunter. "You have to be mighty keerful because the painters 'most always go in pairs and, while you are getting one, the other is doing his best to get you."

The task of skinning the wolf was completed by this time and taking the pelt the boys returned to the place where they had been cleaning the fish they had taken with their trot lines.

"How are we going to divide this bounty?" inquired Ben when they had arrived at the bank of the river.

"I reckon we won't quarrel very long over that," said the hunter laughing quietly as he spoke.

"Let me see," said Ich. "If the bounty is four dollars how much will that be for each one?"

"I don't want any bounty," said the hunter. "I'll leave that for you two boys. You can divide it between you."

"That's mighty good of you, Big Joe," said Ben quickly. "We don't want to be hogs. The wolves may get after us if we try any of the hog's tricks."

"It's yours," said the hunter quietly. "I understand the Ohio Company is adding a bit to the bounty so that you may get a little more than four dollars. I hope so. Boys," he added, "while you're working on the fish I think I'll take my skiff and go out on the river and see what I can do for a pike."

Both boys looked at him longingly, for each was eager to accompany Big Joe who was as skillful a fisherman as he was a hunter. Nevertheless both were aware that the task of preparing the fish was not yet entirely completed. A tub was brought from the house and filled with clean water. While the boys were arranging their catch in this receptacle both were quietly watching Big Joe. He had pushed his skiff off toward a shoal about twenty feet from the bank where he began his task. A big hook and line was cast over the side and in a moment the hunter had drawn on board a chub that weighed at least a quarter of a pound. The hunter lifted the fish and looked at it carefully and then with an exclamation of disgust tossed it up on the shore. Again he cast overboard his hook and line and soon was drawing on board another chub. This fish weighed at least a half pound more and apparently fitted the plan of the hunter.

Removing his catch from the hook he ad-

justed it to another larger hook and then moved his skiff farther out into the river. After he had gone fifty feet nearer the channel he anchored and then, taking the large bait which he had secured, hooked it and cast it far out over the water. At once he began to pull rapidly on his line so that the chub was raised to the surface of the river and seemed to be leaping and jumping as if it were trying to escape the pursuit of some huge fish.

The first try which the hunter made did not bring any results. Once more Big Joe arose in the canoe and, swinging his bait about his head, cast it still farther out into the waters of the river. Again he drew swiftly on his line, pulling hand over hand, and once more the big chub arose to the surface and seemed to be doing its utmost to escape some ravenous enemy.

This time, however, when Big Joe had drawn in less than half his line, there was a sudden commotion in the water and the bait was seized. A moment later Big Joe glanced for a moment at the shore and shouted to the watching boys, "I've got the grandfather of all the pike in the Muskingum. Hi, there, just watch me!"

The excited boys ran down to the bank and peered eagerly across the water at the hunter. In spite of his usual phlegmatic manner it was plain that Big Joe was greatly excited. The

fish was securely hooked and was dragging the skiff from its anchorage. Indeed, as there came a moment of relief, Big Joe hauled in the large stone which he had used as an anchor and dropping it upon the bottom of the little boat, hastily gave his attention again to the struggling fish.

"Look at him!" again shouted Ben in his excitement. "My, that's a whopper!"

"You're right, it is!" echoed Ich. "I'd give my rifle if I was on board that skiff."

"Oh, no you wouldn't," protested Ben soberly.

"Look there! Look there!" exclaimed Ich. "He almost had the skiff capsized!"

"You trust Big Joe," said Ben. "He won't go over; but he's got a big cat or a big pike, bigger'n anything I ever saw in the river."

Both boys became silent as they watched the activities of the fisherman. The huge fish which he had caught was dragging the skiff swiftly over the water. Big Joe was making no effort to restrain his catch, although frequently he pulled in on the line.

The hooked fish now was darting in different directions. First it moved upstream and then, taking a sudden turn, swept swiftly downward with the current. Twice it carried the skiff and its occupant across the channel and only

reversed its flight when Big Joe steadily pulled upon the line.

Ten minutes had elapsed since the fish had been hooked and apparently the end was not yet near.

"I hope he doesn't lose it!" exclaimed Ich. "Whatever it is, I should like to see it."

"You'll see it right soon," said Ben confidently. "Big Joe isn't the man to lose such a catch when once he has got it well hooked."

Ben's words, however, were still unfulfilled when five more minutes had elapsed. The fish was still struggling desperately, although the length of its dashes was less than when first it had been caught. It was still moving swiftly, however, but the efforts of the fisherman had not entirely exhausted it and he was quietly working the huge fish until it should be more nearly worn out.

When five more minutes had passed, apparently the end was in sight. Big Joe was kneeling in the skiff now and leaning over the gunwale. It was evident that he could see his catch and was doing his utmost to draw it steadily toward the boat.

"I wonder if he's got a gaff," said Ich in a low voice.

"Yes, he has," said Ben. "Don't you see it? He's got it in his hands right now."

With his left hand Big Joe had brought the fish nearly alongside the skiff so that its head was toward the stern of the boat. With a quick motion he suddenly drew the fish still nearer and then, seizing the gaff with his right hand, he leaned forward over the water and, with a quick motion, lifting with both his left hand and his right which held the gaff, he drew the great fish on board.

"Hi!" shouted Ich, who was so excited that if his brother had not restrained him he would have leaped into the water. "What have you got, Big Joe? What is it?"

"It's a pike," replied the hunter in a muffled tone. With a club in his hand he quickly put an end to the struggles of the huge fish. The boys could see the fish as in its last desperate struggle it was throwing itself about the little boat. The struggles, however, were soon quieted and when he was at last convinced that no further efforts were required, Big Joe reeled in his line and, after he had placed it carefully on the bottom of the skiff, took up his oars and began to row toward the shore.

The two brothers eagerly awaited his coming, but even their excitement was increased when they peered over at the catch Big Joe had made.

"It's a pike," said the hunter quietly.

"Whew!" said Ich. "Looks like a whale.

It's the biggest fish I ever saw caught in the river."

"It's the biggest pike I ever saw," acknowledged Big Joe, not without pride. "I've seen them that weighed fifty pounds but this fellow will go ten or fifteen pounds better than that."

"I didn't know that pike ever grew to be as large as that," said Ben.

"I never saw one afore as big as this," said the hunter. "As I was telling you, this fellow will weigh every bit of that, maybe he'll go five pounds more."

"What are you going to do with it?" inquired Ich, as the hunter stepped ashore and drew the huge pike after him.

The hunter did not reply to the lad's question but proceeded to drag the body of the fish farther up on the bank. "What'll I do with it?" he then inquired of his companions as he spoke. "I think I'll give it to you. They aren't much good unless they're baked or roasted well. I haven't any fireplace around here and besides I'll let you have it so that you'll have something more for winter."

"Good for you, Big Joe!" shouted Ich. "I'd like to stuff the fish more than I'd like to eat it. I'd stick it up on the walls of the barn and tell Sam Beavens when he comes blowing

round, that's one of our minnows over here. That's like what we use for bait when we go out for real fish. He never caught anything like that. The biggest pike he ever caught didn't weigh more'n twelve pounds and he thought it was a whale. He showed it to me when I was over there and was as proud as a peacock."

"Be sure you don't show him that *you* are," suggested Big Joe dryly. "Just remember that fish is a present to you and don't you tell any whoppers about the way you caught it, either."

Ich's face flushed as Ben laughed but he said no more.

"The best thing you boys can do," suggested the hunter, "is to clean this fish right away and put it along with the rest of your catch."

"But I thought it wasn't any good unless it was cooked together," suggested Ben.

"Well, it's better cooked that way," replied the hunter. "But I'm thinking along about Christmas when the snow is three or four feet deep and you can't get out to shoot anything, even if any game is left around here, you'll be mighty glad to cut off some chunks of the pike for your dinner."

"You're exactly right," said Ben slowly.

Big Joe laughed in his silent manner and

without any further conversation at once proceeded to clean the great pike and prepare it for its place among the provisions which were being stored for the approaching winter. The task was soon completed and after the pike had been cut into four sections, it was placed in the tub with the remainder of the catch which the boys had made that morning.

"I hope father and Phin will be coming back pretty soon," said Ben anxiously. "I'm afraid the fish won't keep if we don't get some salt before long."

"They ought to have been here yesterday," said Ich, "but they'll probably be home today, so that we will be all right."

"You're always worrying about something, Ben."

"I'm not worrying," retorted Ben, "but I don't want to lose all these fish just because we can't salt them down."

"They'll be here pretty soon," said the hunter. "If they promised to come back yesterday, they won't be more than a day or two late. Anyway, I guess the fish will keep until to-morrow if we set the tub in the water and cover it over."

Acting upon his suggestion the two boys lifted the heavy tub and, carrying it to the shore, placed it in the water and then anchored

it by placing two planks across the top on which they also placed heavy stones.

"There, that'll fix things for a while, I reckon," said Ben, as he stood back and surveyed his handiwork. "Now if father and Phin only come in time, we'll be all right for the winter."

Big Joe laughed quietly as he said, "I'm thinking you'll have something more to do to get ready for winter than just salting away a few fish. There's a plenty of trouble around and no one knows what's going to happen."

"What do you mean? Indians?" inquired Ich quickly.

"That's just what I do mean," said the hunter quietly. "Ever since St. Clair and Harmer made such a fizzle of their fights against the Shawnees and the rest of the tribes, every redskin in Ohio is ready to take up his tomahawk and rifle and start on the warpath. Sometimes they haven't waited for war to be declared before they began their job."

"Is there anything new?" inquired Ben anxiously.

"Yes, there is more of the same kind like what's been going on for the last two or three years. Just the other day, I saw Jim Stone and he told me how he and the Putnam boys and Browning were working in their cornfield less

than a week ago. Nobody works now without having a guard stationed. You see there were six of these men and they took turns at being sentinels. One watched the fields while the other five worked. They cut a great deal of corn the first day they were out and were going back the next day, satisfied that the Indians weren't going to give them any trouble. You see they hadn't seen hide nor hair of an Indian on that first day.

"They agreed to meet and start early the next morning, but when they came to the Putnams' house, Browning wasn't there. It seemed they had word from him that he had to go down on the low land, so they decided to wait until he got back. Well, he didn't come back until about ten o'clock and then they all started for the field where they had been working the day before. When they came to the place, they saw around the field a lot of tracks that showed that the Indians had been there. You see it had rained a little in the night and it was easy to mark the places where the Indians had been. They were pretty well scared by that time and, from the number of tracks they saw, the men suspected that there must be at least fifteen or twenty Indians hanging around that cornfield, so they decided they'd go back to the blockhouse and wait a day or

two until things had cleared up. They all said that if it hadn't been for Browning being late, probably every one of them would have been shot by the sneaking redskins."

"That shows it doesn't always pay to be on time," said Ben soberly.

When his companions laughed he said, "It doesn't make any difference what you say. If Browning had been there as he agreed, they would have all started for the cornfield and probably every one of them would have been killed."

"If being behind time is a sure cure for an Indian's bullet, Ben," laughed Ich, "I reckon no redskin in Ohio will be able to do any damage to you or the rest of us if we wait for you."

The conversation abruptly ceased, however, when the hunter called the attention of his companions to two horsemen who could be seen approaching the place from the nearby forest.

CHAPTER III

THE TURKEY HUNT

IN a brief time Ich exclaimed, "That's Phin and father!"

It was soon apparent that the lad's words were correct, for the two men were now clearly seen as they approached the log cabin. Across the pommel of each horse a heavy bag was lying and it was soon evident that another bag was behind each rider, on the back of his horse.

"They've got some salt anyway," said Big Joe quietly.

"That's what they went for," laughed Ich. "What did you think they would bring back?"

"I didn't know whether they'd get any salt or not, it's such a long slow job."

"They've been gone a *week*," suggested Ben, "so they ought to have been able to do something in that time."

The approaching horsemen soon stopped in front of the boys and, as they dismounted, Phineas said to his brother, "Is everything all right here?"

"Yes," answered Ben. "What did you think? Didn't you believe that Ich and I could look after the place while you were gone?"

"Have you seen any Indians?" inquired Phin, ignoring the question.

"Not one," answered Ben. "The hunter here though says they're busy."

"Big Joe is right. They *are* busy."

"What's happened? What's new?" inquired Ich quickly.

"We've seen a half-dozen people on our way home and they all say that the Indians are acting worse than they have for six months."

"Yes," interrupted his father. "We've just heard about Nicholas Carpenter."

"What's happened to him, father?" asked Ich excitedly.

"He has been captured by the Indians. He went out with four men and his boy who is about twelve years old. They also had a little negro lad along with them. Mr. Carpenter has regularly been bringing fresh meat and fresh cows to the soldiers. This time a half-dozen Shawnees got on his trail and they followed them almost all one day, until near sunset. There was a young Shawnee chief leading them, whose name I hear is Tecumseh—one of the brightest young braves in the tribe. They fell on these men at night just before dark

and took Mr. Carpenter and the negro boy."

"What happened to the others?" inquired Ich.

"They got away and brought back the story. It seems they didn't kill or scalp Mr. Carpenter, but one of the men who was hiding in a gulch near the place where the Shawnees made their attack said they dressed him up in a new blanket and put new moccasins on him and then started off with him and the black boy."

"Why did they dress him up that way?" inquired Ben.

"Nobody knows. Probably they thought he was a valuable prisoner and wanted to show that they appreciated his worth. The negro boy had to go along, too."

"Did they dress him up?" asked Ich.

"There was no report that they did. I presume they made him put up with all the difficulties of the march."

"That shows that the Shawnees anyway are busy in the region," said Phin, "and we were afraid that some of them might have shown up here."

"We haven't seen a sign of one," said Ben. "Big Joe told us about what happened to the Putnams and Mr. Stone and Mr. Browning. Mr. Browning was late and that was the only thing that saved the lives of the whole party,"

said Ich with a laugh. "That shows, Phin," he added, "that, when you tell us we must get up on time in the morning, it doesn't always pay to follow your advice."

"Never mind that now," laughed Phin. "We've got enough salt to keep us busy here a long time, that is, if you boys have done what we told you to do."

"What did you tell us to do?" inquired Ich demurely. "You told us to get a lot of fish. How many do you call a lot?"

"Oh, a tub full."

"Come here and we'll show you what we got," said Ich proudly, and, leading the way to the shore, he displayed to his father and his brother the tub filled with fish which they had taken that day. Once more the tale of the hunter's success in catching the big pike had to be retold, but the enthusiasm of all was great over the success which had attended the efforts of the young fisherman.

"We'll get busy to-morrow morning first thing," said Phineas, "and salt down those fish."

"You ought to have some turkeys to salt, too," suggested the hunter, who up to this time had not taken any part in the conversation.

"That's a mighty good suggestion," said

Phin quickly. "We might go out to-night and see what we can do with them."

"I've never seen so many turkeys since I came to Ohio," said the hunter. "Sometimes there are so many that you can knock them down with poles. You can catch a trap full of them without any work at all and, if you use your gun, you can shoot as many as you want to."

"That's provided you find where they are roosting," suggested Ben.

"That's true, lad," said Big Joe. "But I'm thinking I can show you a place not more than a half-mile from here where you can get almost as many as you want. They don't bring any price at all in the settlement now. I carried four to Salter's place and all he would give me was six cents apiece. He says that's all anybody will give. It isn't worth the trouble of shooting them if you can't get more than six cents for a turkey."

"We'll leave you two boys," suggested Phin, "to put the salt in the barn and Big Joe and I'll go out and see what we can do with the turkeys."

"You will not!" spoke up Ich promptly. "Ben and I'll put the salt in the barn but you'll wait for us. We're going along with you and Big Joe to get those turkeys."

"I don't think we ought to leave father here alone," suggested Phineas thoughtfully. "If any Indians should show up here we wouldn't want him to be single-handed in trying to beat them off."

"A mighty lot of good Ben will do if you do leave him," laughed Ich. "I think father is old enough to take care of himself and Ben and I really ought to go along to help you get just as many turkeys as we can bring back."

"You won't get a tail feather!" laughed Phin. "I've been hunting with you before. You'll be so excited when you try to shoot that your shot will be more likely to hit the ground than the trees in which the turkeys may be roosting."

"Never mind that now," retorted Ich. "If father agrees, we'll put the salt in the barn and be ready to start with you and Big Joe in a jiffy."

As their father smiled and did not offer any objection to the younger lads joining the expedition, the salt bags hastily were deposited in the barn and all four of the hunters speedily departed.

"Now, no one is to speak a word," said Phineas, as in single file the four hunters set forth toward the place where the hunter had

said he could show them "all the turkeys they wanted."

"I don't know what you call what you yourself are doing now," retorted Ich. "It seems to me you're doing a lot of talking telling us not to talk."

Phineas laughed, for his younger brother was a prime favorite and in silence the four continued on their way. The sun was now not more than a half hour high in the western sky. It was an ideal time, so Big Joe explained, to start on a turkey hunt. The turkeys soon would be finding their roosting places among the trees and would not yet have become quiet. There would be occasional calls from one tree to another as if the weary birds were telling one another that it was safe for them to go to sleep.

When ten minutes had elapsed Big Joe, who was leading the way, stopped abruptly and indicated that the boys were to look to their priming so that their guns would be ready for quick use when the occasion demanded.

From this point, after Big Joe's advice had been followed, the party advanced cautiously, striving to avoid all places where the fallen limbs of trees might snap beneath their feet and warn the turkeys of the approach of their enemies.

They soon came to the border of the forest and Big Joe quietly led the way as he advanced toward a shallow valley. This valley was not much more than a defile which extended for several hundred feet within the forest. Beech trees were growing plentifully along the borders and already the shadows had lengthened under the rays of the setting sun.

When the party had advanced a hundred feet within the shelter, Big Joe raised his hand as a signal for all to halt. Leaving his companions the hunter then advanced cautiously and silently, moving from tree to tree until he no longer was seen by the boys. Silence followed his departure, while the young hunters waited impatiently for the return of their guide.

Only a few minutes elapsed before the hunter emerged from the shadows and beckoned the boys to approach. By his direction they were spread out so that, although they advanced together, there was an intervening space of six or eight feet between them.

In this manner they carefully followed Big Joe who soon stopped and silently pointed up into the trees before him.

At first, it was impossible for the young hunters to discern anything of special interest in the spreading branches above them. In a brief time, however, their eyes became accus-

tomed to the dim light and they saw perched upon the branches of the trees numberless silent, motionless bodies, which, after a little, they concluded must be the turkeys to which the hunter referred.

With a low whisper, Big Joe drew his companions together and then explained where and how each member of the party was to shoot. They all separated and took the positions assigned them by their leader and then, at a signal from him, they brought their guns to their shoulders and fired at the roosting turkeys.

The reports of the guns rang out almost together. Instantly there was a fluttering in the tree tops and several birds fell to the ground almost at the feet of the hunters, but many more, with twitterings and cries of alarm, flew from their resting places.

Big Joe, who had not fired at the moment when his companions did, now brought his double-barreled shotgun to his shoulder and two quick reports were heard, followed by the sound of bodies tumbling through the branches to the ground.

Quickly the entire party rushed forward to discover how many birds they had obtained.

"Here's five!" declared Ich triumphantly, when he and Ben had brought the victims to a

common pile. "Somebody must have shot two. I think I was lucky to get one."

"It was Big Joe that got two. Didn't you hear him fire twice?" said Ben.

"I believe I did hear his gun go off twice," acknowledged Ich, whose excitement was still keen. "I didn't know whether he got two birds or not."

"Hm," exclaimed Ben. "You didn't think Big Joe had missed his mark, did you?"

"I didn't know," said Ich, laughing as he spoke. "It was so dark, I didn't know but the turkey would get away."

"Well, five of them didn't get away," said Ben demurely. "Shall we load up again?" he added, turning to the hunter as he spoke.

"Not now," replied Big Joe. "We've got enough to carry back to the cabin. We can dress these and salt them down and then get more if we want to. We mustn't slaughter the wild game just for the sake of killing. I've seen some men catch so many turkeys in their traps that they couldn't begin to use all they killed. It was just wanton slaughter. My opinion is that no man has a right to kill anything just for the sake of killing."

"How about mosquitoes?" demanded Ich. "Isn't it all right to kill *them?*"

"I'm talking about game," replied Big Joe

seriously. "I don't mean little things like mosquitoes and gnats. Here, boys, take hold of these birds and we'll carry them back."

The hunter had brought with him several leather thongs with which he tied two birds together so that they might be adjusted to the shoulders of the man who was to carry them. He himself assumed the double load and left his companions to carry one turkey each.

In a brief time they arrived at the house they were seeking and were hailed by Mr. Taylor, who said, "You weren't gone long, boys."

"We didn't have to go very far," exclaimed Ich. "The woods are full of them."

"We had better clean and dress these birds now," said the hunter. "They're in prime condition, too. They've had all the acorns and beechnuts they could eat and they ought to have a fine flavor."

"It doesn't seem to me quite right to leave all these turkeys until next winter," suggested Ich soberly. "I wouldn't mind having one to-morrow."

"You shall have one to-morrow," said the hunter. "We'll pluck them all and draw every one and get them ready for salting. How much salt did you get?" he inquired turning to Phineas.

"Why, we must have a hundred and fifty

pounds. It was a good-sized job to get it, too. When you think that it takes eight hundred gallons of that salt water to make fifty pounds of salt, you've got to figure on allowing a good while for it to boil down. Salt is worth money, too, these days."

"How much is it worth?" inquired Ich.

"Eight dollars a bushel at the settlement."

"I don't see how it concerns you whatever its price is," laughed Phin.

"I'm for making some money," said Ich. "We shot a wolf while you were gone and Big Joe says the bounty is four dollars and that the Ohio Company is adding something to that."

"That's right," laughed Phin. "Tell us where you got the wolf and who shot him?"

Ich eagerly related the story of their exploits and told how three bullets had been found in the body of the wolf after it fell. Then he said, "Big Joe won't take his share of the bounty, so Ben and I will have two dollars apiece anyway."

"That'll buy a lot of things," laughed his older brother, "but I shouldn't spend the money until I got the bounty."

There was still sufficient light in the early evening to enable the party to prepare the turkeys which they had brought back to the

house. The birds were fat and Ich repeatedly referred to his expressed wish that one at least might be served on the following day. There were still four to be prepared for the pickle-barrel and as there were five working, the task was soon completed.

To make sure that his own suggestion would be followed, Ich selected one of the larger turkeys and, leaving the others in a tub which was filled with water, he carried his bird into the house and hung it up near the kitchen fireplace.

"It's strange," laughed Phin, when his brother rejoined the party, "how some people are always thinking of what they can get to eat."

"That's right for me, anyway," declared Ich boldly. "I don't seem ever to be able to get enough to eat. Sometimes when I get up from the table, I'm almost as hungry as when I first sat down."

"You'll get over that," said Ben, "when you're a little older. Your appetite will last you for a year or two more and then—"

"And then what?" interrupted Ich. "I don't see that I eat any more than some other folks I know."

"I don't know how you can see how much other people eat," laughed Phin. "I never

see you stop long enough at the table to look at anything except your plate, unless it was at something you wanted to put on the plate."

"That will do for you!" said Ich, making as if he would upset his older brother. "I'm the youngest so I have to put up with everything."

"You certainly are a martyr to the cause," laughed Phin. "I don't know that I ever saw a preacher out here that was quite as solemn as you are."

"That's all right," retorted Ich. "You wait till the year has gone. I mean the one you're talking about when I shall get through eating so much and then I'll be pretty nearly grown up. When that comes, I promise you the first thing I do will be to put you on your back."

"It will take you more than a year to do that," said Ben, so solemnly that all laughed.

It was now dark and as Phin and his father were tired from their long ride and the labors which they had undergone they decided to seek their beds at once. The two younger boys halted near the corner of the house where the huge barrel had been placed to catch the rain as it dripped from the roof. Here they took a wooden bowl and filled it with water and then thoroughly washed their faces and hands, a duty which had been taught them by their

mother years before they had left their Massachusetts home. Even then the younger boys lingered, suspicious that the older ones might not follow them to bed. Their thoughts, however, were soon gone and in a brief time silence rested over the lonely little cabin.

Several times during the night, Phin and his father, as well as Big Joe, arose and going outside the house listened intently and peered in every direction to discover whether or not the trailing Shawnees were near the place.

When morning came not an Indian had been seen and the fears of the household were somewhat relieved.

Phin had not told his younger brothers all the reports which he had heard on their return from the Salt Licks. It was plain that, although the Indians had been active during the summer, their attacks being upon lonely settlers, their efforts now were increasing. The failure to withstand the red warriors in battle had greatly encouraged the Indians who now believed they were well nigh invincible. They were led, too, by several chiefs who were leaders of no mean ability. Perhaps the ablest of them all was Little Turtle, a Shawnee chief, who, sooner than the boys dreamed, was to show them that their fears of hostilities were well grounded.

CHAPTER IV

THE YOUNG HUNTERS

THE days following the return of Phineas and his father were busy ones for all the boys. Big Joe had been compelled to depart, as he was serving as one of the cordon of guards for one of the larger blockhouses. Every blockhouse now had several of these hunters, or spies as they sometimes were called, whose duties were to inspect carefully the adjoining region in a search for the possible approach of their foes. At times these guards covered twenty-five or thirty miles each day as they scoured the region for signs of the approach of the Indians. To every one a specific territory was allotted and he was held responsible for danger that might be discovered in that region.

Big Joe had obtained a leave of absence for two or three days but the time had now expired and he was about to return to his regular duties.

In addition to the work of these spies in watching for signs of their enemies they were

also expected to provide at least part of the meat that was needed in the blockhouse. As the fall was now approaching and most of the labor in the fields had been completed, there would be more men free to engage in a task similar to that with which the hunter and his friends were now busy.

"Good-by, Big Joe!" called Ich as the hunter departed early in the morning. "We'll see you again soon."

Big Joe nodded his head but made no other response to the farewell of his friends. Silently he proceeded toward the forest not far away and in a brief time disappeared from the sight of those who had been watching him.

"That must be great work," said Ich enthusiastically. "I wonder if I'm not old enough to be a spy myself."

"You surely are not," retorted Ben. "You're just old enough to help in salting down these turkeys. Phin and father have left that job to you and me and the sooner we begin it the better it will be for us all."

"But we'll want more turkeys than we've got now," suggested Ich.

"So we shall," admitted his brother, "but the first thing is to take care of those we already have killed."

The boys at once proceeded to the bank of

the river and drew forth the tub of turkey meat which had been covered and left in the water throughout the night.

The task of salting down these turkeys was not a difficult one, for both boys had been warned to be frugal in the use of the salt, an article which was so scarce that every particle must be used and all waste avoided.

An hour afterward their elder brother Phineas came to inspect the work and complimented both boys on the completion of their task. "We'll have to try for some more turkeys," he suggested. "They won't be here a great while and I wonder if it might not be a good thing for us to get some of the gray squirrels too?"

These squirrels were so plentiful that it had not occurred to either Ich or Ben that they might be used as a source of food for the coming winter days.

"I never saw so many squirrels in my life," exclaimed Phin, "as I did yesterday. On our way home we saw a cornfield up the river that was just alive with them. That was bad enough, but when we went on to the creek we found the water filled with them. There must have been millions."

"What were they doing? Where were they going?" inquired Ich, interested in a mo-

ment in the description his brother had given.

"I haven't found any one who seems to know," said Phin, "but there were millions of them. John Chapman told me that he had seen thousands swimming in the river and when they got in a cornfield they didn't leave it until it was stripped absolutely bare."

"Where do you think they're going, Phin?" asked Ben.

"Why, they're probably going south, trying to get rid of the winter. They used to tell about the squirrels gathering up the nuts and getting ready for cold weather. I suppose some of them do that now, but those that we saw were certainly moving pretty fast."

"I thought you said they were in the cornfield," suggested Ich.

"If you had listened with the whole length of both your ears, Ich," said his brother solemnly, "you would have heard me say we saw thousands of them in a cornfield and that later we saw a good many more swimming across the creek."

"That's all right," laughed Ich. "But what about these turkeys?"

"There isn't much use in our trying to get any right now," explained Phin. "We'd better do as Big Joe did and wait until sunset."

"But Big Joe said that lots of people were

catching them in traps. He said, too, that a good many people were knocking them down with clubs, there were so many of the birds in the woods."

"You and Ben can go out and set some snares if you want to. There isn't very much to do around the place to-day and then when it comes night we can take our guns and go out and get some of those you haven't caught. Of course," he added laughingly, "there won't be many that get away, but then we don't want to waste turkey meat with the winter coming on, so we'll work both plans."

Eagerly the two boys accepted the suggestion and taking their shotguns and a ball of slight but very strong leathern string, some of which had been made from the sinews of deer, they started together for the place where the preceding evening their efforts had met with such surprising success.

When they arrived at the place they were seeking, they took the small bag of corn which they had brought with them and carefully arranged three or four kernels in one spot, selecting a bank where it would be necessary for the turkeys to lift up their heads in order to obtain the tempting grain. On the ground beneath they spread their nooses of deer-sinew to which a string several feet in length had been at-

tached and securely fastened to a nearby tree. They were expecting that a turkey, attracted by the sight of the grain, in his efforts to reach it, would step within the noose and then as he moved would draw the cord tightly about his leg.

The boys were busy for two hours or more arranging their traps along a bank by which they thought the turkeys would come back to the roosting places which they had found the preceding evening.

"You don't suppose we scared them off, do you, Ben?" inquired Ich. "You see we fired right into the trees last night and they may not come back here again to roost."

"Don't you worry about that," retorted Ben confidently. "A turkey hasn't any bigger brain than a hen. There isn't any such fool animal in the woods as a turkey. Do you know, I think a turkey is a bigger fool than a hen and that seems almost impossible."

"There is another animal," laughed Ich, "that hasn't as much brains as a turkey."

"What's that?"

"It's a sheep. I think the sheep is the biggest fool among all the animals."

"How about a hog?"

"Oh, a hog is smart. I saw a pig that Sam Brookins had trained and it would do all sorts

of tricks. It would march around on its hind feet and carry a little wooden gun and squeal when Sam asked it if it wanted any swill. A hog is smart, but a sheep! Ba-a-a-a, that's about all they know. It's all the language they have and all the words they can speak."

"Sometimes sheep can do a lot of damage."

"How? What do you mean?"

"They can knock a man right off of his pins."

"I never saw one do it," laughed Ich.

"No, but you had one do it to you."

"I did? When?"

"Why, before we left Massachusetts. You were a little fellow and father had a big, ugly ram that had the biggest horns I ever saw on a sheep. The fellow was ugly too, and they used to keep him in a pen. One day you climbed over into the pen and the old fellow started for you and he pretty nearly got you."

"Why? What did he do?"

"Why, he caught you right off your feet and must have thrown you ten feet before you struck the ground. Then he backed up and would have rammed the life out of your body if father hadn't come along just then and beat him off with a club."

"I don't remember anything about it," said Ich.

"You were just a little fellow at the time."

"Yes, but how big were you? You're only two years older than I am."

"I was just old enough to remember you."

"Were you in the pen, too?"

"Yes, I was," acknowledged Ben. "You and I both climbed over the board fence—"

"Yes, and you probably were the one that got me into the thing," interrupted Ich. "I wouldn't get into that kind of mischief if I was left to myself."

"It doesn't make any difference who began it. I hollered louder than you did and I guess it was lucky for you that I did. If father hadn't heard me that old ram would have pounded the life out of both of us."

"Well, Ben," said Ich demurely, "you always were a noisy chap and I can just see you almost hollering your head off, you were so scared."

"I'll own up I was scared," acknowledged Ben, "but I don't think I was ever very noisy."

As Ben was notoriously quiet in his manner and seldom spoke, Ich laughed aloud at the solemn statement of his demure brother.

"There!" exclaimed Ben. "At last we've used up all our string and we must have set twenty traps."

"Yes, we've set all of that," assented Ich,

"and now I'm thinking it'll be a good thing for us to go home and get something to eat. I'm hungry."

"You always are," said Ben simply.

"I'll own up to that," laughed Ich. "Those are the two words in the English language I've practiced on more than any others and I think I can say them just as they ought to be said."

The boys stopped for a moment before they departed and peered into the adjacent forest. They had not seen a turkey since their arrival, but they were not surprised because, at that time of the day, doubtless the birds were all farther within the forest and hidden from the sight of prowling beasts or passing men. It was marvelous the skill with which a mother turkey concealed her brood. It was almost impossible for a hunter to distinguish between the little turkeys that, at the warning note of the mother bird, had fled for shelter beneath the leaves that strewed the ground. At this time the turkeys were well grown, however, but their skill in evading the eyes of enemies was even greater than when they were smaller.

"They come here about sundown," suggested Ich. "At least that's what they did last night and that was the time Big Joe told us to look for them if we wanted to shoot any."

"We'll come back here after supper," as-

sented Ben, "and maybe we'll have more turkeys than we can carry back to the cabin."

At dusk not only the two younger boys but Phin and their father, each with a shotgun in hand, started toward the place where the traps had been set and hoped they would find flocks of turkeys perched upon the boughs of the beech trees in the roosting places they had selected for the night.

"If there are any birds in your noose," suggested Phin, "we'd better leave them until we do our shooting."

"Of course, that's the way," assented Ich. "Did you think we wanted to scare all the birds off their roosts?"

"No, I didn't. But then I never know just what you youngsters are going to do," said Phin.

"We're not so much younger than you," protested Ich. "I'm fifteen, Ben's seventeen and you're not nineteen yet. You're not as old as you will be if you live a year or two longer."

"I haven't denied that," laughed Phin.

"No," retorted his younger brother, "but you talk like the preacher when he comes here on his round. He used to pat me on the head and tell me he hoped I would be a good little

boy. I didn't like to have him do that and I don't like it when you try to pat me on the head, either."

All three of his companions laughed at the words of the boy and Phin said, "I'd almost forgotten you were such a big fellow, Ich. It won't be very long now before you'll be a man and I reckon I'd better begin to practice talking to you now so that you'll understand me when you are grown up."

A warning from their father who was leading the way at this moment caused all three of the boys to become silent.

As they listened they heard an occasional gobble from the nearby trees which indicated that the turkeys had not been so thoroughly frightened the preceding evening that they had failed to return to their roosting places.

Advancing cautiously within the border the hunters soon were able to discern the dark forms of the birds resting on the limbs of the trees above them. Then it was that Phin whispered to his companions to follow the plan adopted by the hunter the night before, and directing each of the boys to select a bird as his own target and to shoot in such a manner that only one fired at each bird, he gave the word for them to fire.

Together the reports of the guns rang out

and once more several bodies came tumbling from the perches in the trees.

As the boys ran quickly forward to make certain of their victims they laughed aloud when they discovered that near by were several turkeys that had been caught in the snares that had been set for them.

When at last all the bodies of the turkeys had been secured and thrown into one pile the boys quickly wrung the necks of the birds that had been caught, and then they found that they had nine turkeys to carry back to the cabin. As some of them were quite large the load of each hunter was heavy and when they at last arrived at the house they threw the birds upon the ground and Ich loudly and volubly expressed his relief that he could get rid of his burden.

"I think that'll be all we'll want," said Phin. "We may want a turkey to eat right now but I think we've got about all we want for the winter. We can't eat just turkeys and we now have fifteen or twenty altogether."

"I don't think that's very much," protested Ich. "I'm so hungry right now that I think I could eat almost a whole one myself. They aren't so very big, Phin."

"All right," laughed his older brother. "We'll salt these down and then we can tell

better whether we need any more or not. It wouldn't take very long for us to cloy on turkeys."

"I'm not so sure about that," said Ich so demurely that all his companions laughed.

The following morning was another busy one for the members of the household as the turkeys must be plucked and drawn and then thoroughly washed and prepared for salting and packing away in the tubs.

When at last this task had been completed, at Ich's earnest plea they repeated their hunt and secured six more turkeys. Both Phin and his father now declared that it would be a shame to slaughter any more of the birds and consequently the hunt was abandoned.

Meanwhile the amount of fish was increased and the trot line which was set two nights in succession brought in a large catch each time. Indeed it did not seem possible that hunger could invade the log cabin even if the winter should be severe and unduly prolonged. There was cornmeal which had been made by grinding the corn in a hand mill. This was a difficult task and tested the endurance of the boys who were called upon for the labor. It was while Ich and Ben were both engaged in this task that the former said, "Do you know what I'm going to do, Ben?"

"No," replied his brother as he continued his wearying task.

"I'm going in for one of those floating mills. You know they're talking about building one and then taking it up and down the river and letting it do the grinding for anybody that wants it all along the shore."

"They haven't tried it yet. When there's corn enough I think the easiest way is to take it up to Gordon's mill and let him grind it."

"Yes, but that's a day's job," protested Ich.

"What of it?"

"Nothing except that it takes all day," laughed Ich. "The other plan means that the mill comes right to your door and all you have to do is to stop it, bring on your corn and in a little while you've got your grist and the work is all done."

"Some think that they never can make a floating mill work," suggested Ben.

"They can't tell till they try, that's one thing sure," declared Ich. "Some folks are always scared out before they begin anything."

"Better be that," retorted Ben, "than get into so many things you can't do."

"I don't believe that," said Ich quickly. "Who's that coming yonder?" he inquired quickly, as he turned toward the rough pathway that emerged from the woods.

"It's Captain Rogers," said Ben in a low voice. "There are one, two, three, four men with him. What do you suppose he wants now? He's supposed to be one of the spies, isn't he?"

Ich did not reply but his eyes were shining with excitement as he watched the approach of the little band with doughty Captain Rogers, who marched at its head.

CHAPTER V

THE PLAN OF CAPTAIN ROGERS

IT was at once manifest to Ich who was shrewdly observing the visitors, that Captain Rogers was greatly distressed and perplexed. Upon the invitation of Mr. Taylor the entire company seated themselves beneath the great maple trees that were growing in abundance between the cabin and the fields at the right of the little building. It was now late in the afternoon and the sun was only a half-hour or more above the western horizon. Already there was a tang in the air which indicated the coming of the night, when the warm day would give place to the cooler breezes which then swept up the valley.

Ich and Ben were interested observers of their elders and in silence took their places just outside the band. They were able to hear all that was said and, although they were deeply interested, it was well understood that their part in the conference was to be silence and silence only.

"I've come to see you, neighbor," said Cap-

tain Rogers solemnly, "because something must be done. No longer is it safe for our settlers along the banks of the river."

"Have you had any more bad news?" inquired Mr. Taylor.

"Yes, and plenty of it," replied the captain solemnly. "A couple of boys were massacred up the valley only yesterday. The Indians are busy everywhere. We know of nearly a hundred whites that have been killed within the last two or three months."

There was silence for a moment as the words of the Captain were heard and then Phin spoke up eagerly and said, "Captain Rogers, what do you advise? What's the best thing we can do? I've sometimes thought I ought to join the rangers."

"Never mind that now, Phin," said Captain Rogers. "We must consider the best plans for protecting our people at once."

"What do you suggest?" inquired Mr. Taylor.

"I'm thinking that our best plan will be to put up a blockhouse fort. I've been thinking it over and working out some of the plans. If thirty or forty families can get together, the men folk can haul the timbers for the cabins and the palisades and it won't take very long to build such a place as I have in mind."

"Have you found a good location? Where is the best place?"

"There's a place not very far away, up the river on a bluff. Right behind the place there's a swamp which would protect it from the rear. The river is in front and the bluff is right on the bank. We can build some palisades in front of the place, letting them slope so that it would be hid if any Indians should come to the river."

"Well, what's on the sides of the place, Captain Rogers?" asked Phin.

"The trees are thick and fairly large on one side and the other side is open. I don't believe the trees would bother us, but even if they should provide some hiding places for the redskins the spot is the most likely one I've found."

"When do you think we ought to begin?" inquired Phin.

"Just as soon as we can get enough of the pioneers to agree to the plan. I'm working on that now, and going from one place to another. I'm planning to spend the night with you and go on in the morning. Just as soon as I've received the consent of the people I want, then we'll be ready to begin operations."

All three boys were soon busy preparing the evening meal. The addition of unexpected

visitors made somewhat of a draft upon their provisions but the feeling of hospitality was keen along the valley. A visitor was not only rare, but welcome. In the case of Captain Rogers, who was one of the men most deeply respected in all the region, there was an added pleasure in having him as a guest, especially when his visit was due to such a serious report as he had made.

The following morning the doughty old soldier, who was an intensely religious man, insisted that all should assemble while he conducted morning worship. They sang a familiar hymn and the Captain read from the Bible, reading first a chapter from the Old Testament then following it by one from the New. To this he added a Psalm, and he did not select one of the shorter ones for his purpose. This in turn was followed by a long prayer offered by the Captain while his audience were devoutly kneeling about him. Altogether nearly an hour was consumed in the morning devotions. Ich winked meaningly at his brother Ben, but the latter did not respond, and it was plain that all had been impressed by the devout feelings and serious purposes of Captain Rogers.

Several weeks elapsed before Captain Rogers again appeared at the clearing. This time he

came alone and, after a brief report, departed.

"We have arranged," explained the Captain, "for putting up a place of defense and refuge at the spot I told you about when I was here before. We have decided to call it Farmers' Castle. There will be room for between two and three hundred people, including the children, and I want to show you just what we are planning to do in building it."

"When do you expect to begin?"

"We've had an assembly of all the men we can muster at Captain Jonathan Stone's blockhouse. Last Tuesday we decided that we would collect about thirty families along the river and have them all live in Farmers' Castle. The place I have selected, you know, is the Middle Settlement, where Colonel Cushing and Colonel Battelle already have big log houses. The place will be a good one for us to make our roads in and, if we work as hard as we ought to, we'll have it in good shape in a very short time."

"We must work hard and fast," suggested Mr. Taylor. "Our very lives may depend upon it."

"Yes, that's true," said Captain Rogers solemnly. "I don't think many realize in what a dangerous situation we are placed. The Indians are becoming steadily worse and are

more and more determined to drive all the whites out of this part of Ohio. I haven't shown you just what our plans are," he added, as he drew from his pocket a large paper on which he had roughly sketched the location of the various buildings and streets in what was to be known as Farmers' Castle.

He indicated where thirteen blockhouses were to be built within the inclosure. These houses were to be erected in two rows with a wide street between. The basement of each house was to be twenty feet square and its upper story twenty-two feet square. By having the higher part project slightly over the lower, he explained, a guard might be established there which would be able to shoot directly down upon any Indians that might attack the blockhouses or try to batter down the walls.

He said also that the houses were to be built of logs—each log to be about one foot in diameter. After the buildings had been erected the chinks between the logs were to be filled in with mortar. Doors and window shutters were to be made of thick oak planks, and stout bars of oak or hickory were also to be made and kept in reserve in every house so that in case of an attack the doors might be doubly protected.

There were several yoke of oxen owned by different settlers and it was explained that

every family was expected to bring these oxen for drawing the larger timbers from the nearby forest. In this manner the trees at the right of Farmers' Castle would be cut down and the space left open in order that none of the Shawnees might approach without being discovered.

"We'll have handsleds for drawing the small timbers," continued Captain Rogers, "and if by any chance we have some snow, that will help us to work all the faster and bring in the timbers that we need. We'll have pickets set around the place. We'll use only quartered oak for the pickets and I've figured out that there are enough trees growing on the plain near the place to give us all we shall need. We'll pick out the trees that are about a foot in diameter and the pickets ought to be at least fourteen feet long. We'll set them four feet in the ground and that will leave the palisade about ten feet high. We'll have the smooth sides set outward and that will make it harder for any one to climb over them. We'll have to strengthen these palisades by using tree-nails and ribbands."

"What'll you do between the houses?" inquired Phin, who was deeply interested in the project of their visitor.

"We'll fill in the space between the houses

with pickets just the same as we have in the palisades. Only, on those that reach out over the bank of the river, we'll have them sloping and projecting in such a way that the Indians can't climb up them."

"What about your gates?" inquired Mr. Taylor.

"My plan," explained the captain, as he pointed with his finger toward the plans before him, "is to have gates of the heaviest kind of timber, one at the east end and the other at the west end. We'll have those fitted out with heavy oak or hickory bars the same as we have planned for the doors. We'll have two or three smaller gates on the river side."

"Why on that side?" asked Phin quickly.

"So that in case of fire or of a sudden attack if it should become necessary to try to get away, we can get out of Farmers' Castle on to the river and perhaps get a good start before the redskins know that we have left. I'm not expecting anything like that to happen but we have to plan for everything."

"How large will Farmers' Castle be with all these palisades and walls?" inquired Mr. Taylor.

"The whole space will be about eighty rods by sixty. If my plans are carried out, it will be quite an imposing little fortress. It will

stand up high on the bluff and can be seen far down the river."

"What about the animals we've got?" inquired Phin.

"The animals like the pigs and the cows that are within half or three-quarters of a mile of Farmers' Castle can be left and will have to take their chance. I plan for parties of men to go out every morning to feed such stock, but when the spies bring in any report of unusual danger, we'll drive all the stock inside the palisades. Then we can shut and bar the gates and perhaps be as safe or safer than we would be anywhere else."

"Are you sure you have provided room enough for two hundred people?"

"Yes, and a few more," replied the captain confidently. "On the rear of the corner blockhouse, which we plan to have a little higher than the others, we are going to have a watch tower about eight feet above the roof. We'll plan to have a sentry stationed there all the time, day and night."

"I think you'll have to do more than have sentries," suggested Mr. Taylor. "With so many people together you will have to have a regular police force just like a besieged fort."

"That's exactly what we expect to do," said the Captain quickly. "We are going to have

a roll call by the orderly sergeant every morning at sunrise. If any man fails to answer or oversleeps himself and isn't on hand, we have fixed a penalty that he shall work all day helping to cut out the stumps in the middle of Farmers' Castle, so that the ground will be level. The stumps will be pretty thick there when we first go in."

"Have you got a flag?" asked Phin.

"We'll have a flag," answered Captain Rogers. "My plan calls for a flagstaff near the west end of the fortress. Near by it, we'll have a large iron howitzer, mounted on a platform, and when it is encased in wood, it will look like a regular six-pounder. We'll have that gun fired regularly, every night and every morning. One can hear it if he is several miles away for the echoes there are wonderful."

"If the Indians hear it," suggested Ich, who could no longer restrain his interest, "they won't be likely to come near the place."

Captain Rogers smiled at the words of the impulsive boy but ignoring his suggestion said, "Around the cannon we'll plan to have our regular meeting place. There the men can talk and the women can gossip and we can all hear the reports which the spies will bring in every day. There's where we'll tell and learn the

news. That will be our place to rally in case we are attacked. The officer of the day must inspect the gates, pickets, etc., and his authority must be absolute."

"What about supplies?" inquired Mr. Taylor.

"Every one must bring all he has. We'll have a day for slaughtering all the hogs that are fat and then we'll cure the hams and salt them."

"We've got a lot of fish and turkeys that we have salted down," broke in Ich once more, who was unable to remain silent.

"That will be excellent," said the Captain. "You must bring all you have."

"We'll do it," said Ich enthusiastically, rising as he spoke as if he were preparing at that moment to enter upon the task.

"In the upper room of every house," explained the Captain, "we'll have a large cask or hogshead put and one of our rules will be that it must be kept filled with water all the time. We'll have to guard against fire almost as rigidly as against attacks by the redskins. One of our strictest rules will have to be that no grain or fodder shall be kept near any of the houses."

CHAPTER VI

PURSUED BY WOLVES

THE interest of his listeners in the plan which Captain Rogers clearly set before his hearers was keen, and it was difficult for Ich to restrain his desire to take part in the conversation. Several times the lad interrupted either his father or the Captain, but both men were so deeply concerned that the lack of respect on the part of the boy was ignored.

"We have planned to have an officer of the day," explained Captain Rogers. "It will be his duty in part to inspect the gates, look after the pickets and have general charge of the Castle. We'll have to make his authority absolute."

"I should like to be officer of the day," laughed Ich.

"You'll have enough to do to keep yourself where you belong," retorted Ben.

"Captain Rogers, how old does a boy have to be before he'll be counted among the men who are going to fight for Farmers' Castle?" asked Ich.

"We expect to have every boy of sixteen or older enrolled and he will become a part of the force that will fight when it becomes necessary."

"That ought to take me in," exclaimed Ich. "I'm fifteen and shall be sixteen my next birthday."

"As that is only eleven months and six days away," said his elder brother dryly, "a little thing like that won't count very much."

"Never you mind that," retorted Ich. "I'm in my sixteenth year and Captain Rogers will let me enroll. I know he will."

As he spoke, Phin turned eagerly to the doughty soldier and the faint trace of a smile on his face betrayed the interest, as well as amusement of the Captain. "We'll settle that matter later," he said at last quietly.

"But I don't want to settle it later," persisted Ich. "I want to know right now. I'm big enough and strong enough—"

"And when you get to be old enough," broke in Phin, "you'll be able to serve in the fighting forces."

"I am big enough and strong enough now," retorted Ich, "and I intend to do my part."

"Well, we'll see! We'll see!" said the Captain exchanging a smiling glance with the father of the boys. "I want to go on and ex-

plain a little more about what we are planning to do at Farmers' Castle and then I'll leave you to your work. I'm thinking that the greatest danger we shall have will come when our men are at work. When they go out into the fields in the spring and summer, they'll have to go in companies. Some of the clearings will be at least three miles away, though there'll be a good many close by. I think we'll have to send fifteen or twenty men at a time and do the work on the clearings in that way. We'll have sentries stationed at every point so that it won't be possible for the redskins to creep up on our forces and attack them when they are busily at work."

"There'll be more danger still when these parties are coming or going from the Castle," suggested Phin.

"You are correct," admitted Captain Rogers, "but we have provided also for that. We shall have flanking parties on the lookout for signs of the Indians."

When Captain Rogers at last departed, the excitement which he had aroused still continued and it was unduly late at night before the boys retired. Their minds were filled with the prospect of a great gathering at Farmers' Castle and, though much of the work of erecting the defense was still to be done, both Ben

and Ich were acting as if the fortress had become an established fact.

Several weeks later, after numerous conferences had been held, the work of erecting Farmers' Castle was taken in hand so vigorously that it progressed rapidly. A force of at least forty men was busily at work from sunrise until the close of day. Every one who owned an ox team contributed his labor, as well as that of the oxen, to the task. Logs of the size described by Captain Rogers in his interview were hauled and rapidly fashioned into shape for timbers and beams or for palisades that were to protect the Castle from an approach from the river.

It was the first of the year when at last the families moved in. The excitement among the people was great and led to some confusion. However, after a brief time, the families settled into the various blockhouses or log huts that had been assigned them and the life of the Castle took on the regular form that had been designed for protection from the Indians.

One of the earliest occupations had been slaughtering the hogs that had been fatted. This slaughter was in common. Every one possessing any animals contributed his part toward the supply of meat that would be needed before the winter should pass. The meat of

the slaughtered hogs was hung up in smokehouses that had been erected near the garret.

One night, however, the entire force was startled by the cry of "fire." When Ich and Phin leaped from their bed and hastily donned their clothing and joined the assembly in the center of the Castle, they discovered that fire had accidentally broken out in one of the smokehouses. Afterward it was found that the man in charge had been careless and had not completely extinguished the fire which had been kindled in the corn cobs that had been used in smoking the hams.

In spite of the efforts of the inmates of the Castle to extinguish the flames, the fire had gained such headway when it was discovered that it was impossible to fight it. In a brief time the smokehouses all were burned to the ground and all the meat which had been hanging within them had been destroyed or spoiled.

On the following day, it was learned that the Indians had either killed or destroyed most of the hogs that had been left in the pens at a distance from the Castle. It has been explained that these animals were visited once in three or four days for food and care.

A cloud of gloom settled over the inmates of Farmers' Castle at the loss of their store of meat for the winter. A special task now de-

volved upon the rangers, who, in addition to their labor of making their daily rounds in their efforts to discover whether the Indians were threatening an attack or not, were compelled to be on the lookout for game that might be brought back to the Castle. Not very much of this was to be found in the winter. The turkeys had disappeared, squirrels had gone and the bears had settled into their winter quarters. However, an occasional mild day brought forth some of the animals from their hiding places. An occasional deer also provided meat that was eagerly received by the hungry people.

The task of fishing through the ice in the river was now resumed and in this way considerable supplies were also provided without undue labor on the part of the inmates.

One day in January, Ich said to his older brother Phin, "I'm sure there's a tub of salt fish that we left in our barn. I think we could take a sled and go over and get it."

"If you're sure about it," replied Phin, "there's no question. You ought to go at once. You had better see Corporal Shaw. He's the Corporal of the Guard now and you ask him for permission to leave. Will you go alone or will Ben go with you?"

"Just as the Corporal says," answered Ich, who, in spite of his enthusiasm, had become

more fully aware of the daily danger that beset the refugees in Farmers' Castle. "I'll go and see him at once," suggested Ich.

Within a brief time the lad found the Corporal of the guard and explained to him what his plan was.

"By all means," said Corporal Shaw. "If you think you have any supplies, they ought to be brought to the Castle. You may take a sled and I don't think you'll have much trouble in bringing the tub."

"You think I'd better go alone or have Ben go with me?"

"Take a gun and go alone. You won't be more than three quarters of a mile or a mile away and, if we hear your gun, we'll probably know you are in trouble. But I don't like to have more than one of our men away at the same time, unless it is necessary."

Ich's face beamed at his inclusion among the "men." His plea to be enrolled among the defenders of Farmers' Castle had been granted and no soldier was prouder than young Ich Taylor over his selection. His face beamed, his shoulders were thrown back and his condescension to the younger boys became a subject of good-natured bantering from his friends.

"See that you get back here within two

hours," suggested the Corporal. "We may need your services."

Corporal Shaw's eyes were twinkling, but Ich was so elated by the consent he had obtained that he had no thought for other matters. Speedily obtaining a strong sled he at once departed from the Castle and started for his home, where he was positive a tub of salted fish or meat had been left. Just why it had not been brought with the other supplies, he did not know, but, as he was positive the meat was still there and could be had, he set forth with full confidence on his expedition.

Slung over his shoulder was a rifle which Big Joe had selected for him from the guns which had been brought to the place of refuge. It was a good gun as Ich well knew, because already he had tested it thoroughly when he had been among those who had left the fort one day in search of fresh provisions.

Although a part of his way led through the forest, Ich, with his rifle over his shoulder and dragging his sled behind him, proceeded confidently on his way and without any mishap arrived at his home. He at once proceeded to the barn where he found that his predictions were correct. A tub of the salted turkeys was still in a good taste of preservation and he was highly elated when at last he had worked this

tub upon his sled and was preparing to return to the Castle.

The silence of the forest became somewhat oppressive, for the afternoon sun of the short day was now only a little above the tips of the forest. Snow to the depth of several inches covered the ground and brought out all the peculiarities of the trees and bushes. Ich was watchful for rabbits that might be seen and would add materially to the store of provisions in the Castle.

However, as he advanced, the wintry landscape became more and more impressive. The sky above him was gray and filled with promise of a coming storm. The trunks of the trees appeared to be unduly dark against the background of the snow. His father frequently had told him that such a sign was an indication of coming storms or a modification in the wind. As the past few days had been very cold, the indications of a change in the temperature were pleasing to the lad. Still Ich was thinking of the strange and silent scene through which he was moving. Some of the broken trunks reminded him of men who were standing with guns at their shoulders, leveled at unseen foes. The birch trees presented almost a ghostly appearance as he drew near. The oaks and maples were like guards of the sun,

so sturdy and changeless did they appear to be.

Once or twice Ich heard the hoot of an owl that apparently was preparing for his midnight incursion and the harsh call of several crows that seemed to be following him, frequently broke in on the silence of the forest.

When Ich had covered about half the distance he must traverse, he abruptly stopped and listened when he heard far behind him a sound that was familiar to the lad. It was the fierce, long howl of a wolf.

Instantly Ich was aware of the peril that threatened him. Without doubt a wolf had obtained the scent of the meat he was carrying back to the Castle and was now swiftly following on his trail. The howl indicated that others soon would join the fierce animal that had in this way announced his discovery of food. Already Ich was picturing to himself the hungry pack close upon his heels as they followed him through the forest.

Ich began to run, pulling the unwieldy sled after him. He had not advanced far, however, before he was convinced that the wolf had been joined by others and that they were coming swiftly on his trail. Several times he glanced behind him, expecting to see the fierce eyes and the huge jaws of the wolves which at such a

time were foes not easily driven away. If they should prove to be the gaunt gray, or timber wolves, he was aware that his peril would be greatly increased.

Still Ich did his best to increase the speed at which he was running. He still clung to his sled for he was determined not to lose the load which meant so much to the hungry people at Farmers' Castle. Only as a last resort would he let go and flee for his life if occasion demanded such action. He was peering eagerly before him, hoping that he might discover the presence of some man from the fort but the gaunt outlines of the trees were the only objects he saw. Still he fled on until he was breathing with difficulty and, in spite of the chill air, the perspiration was rolling in streams down his face.

There had been silence behind him for several minutes now, and yet the young pioneer was well aware that this did not imply that his peril had passed. Indeed he was in greater fear and turned to glance keenly into the forest behind him.

As he did so, he discovered the long, gaunt body of a huge wolf followed by two others not more than fifty feet behind him. The time of his peril had arrived and the terrified lad was aware that he must instantly act or no report

of his efforts would ever be received at Farmers' Castle.

Without hesitation Ich instantly flung aside the strap by which he was drawing the sled and with his utmost speed fled toward a large beech tree which was only a few yards away. The lower branches of this tree were within easy reach and, still retaining his rifle, Ich fled to them as a refuge. There was no time now even to glance behind him. The wolves had discovered his presence and with howls and wild cries were swiftly approaching. Ich knew from stories which had been told him by the hunters, how necessary it was that he should still retain his rifle.

Running to the base of the tree he leaped from the ground and with his right hand seized the branch directly above him, still holding his rifle in his left hand. In his terror he climbed still higher before he looked beneath him and then grasped the branch, throwing his arms around it as he stared at the howling, maddened animals which now were directly below him.

There were three wolves at the base of the tree. One of them, larger than the others, was leaping frantically at the trunk as if it were minded to follow the fleeing lad into his place of refuge. Once the paws of the maddened animal caught on the branch and held for a

moment and Ich trembled and fear swept over him that the maddened wolf might be able to retain its hold.

The frantic wolf, however, fell back among his fellows and all three at once began to clamber once more against the bark. They could not climb, however, and, convinced that they were now unable to reach him in his place of retreat, Ich slowly drew his rifle to his shoulder and aimed at the leader of the small pack.

A prolonged howl greeted the report of the gun and it was plain to the excited boy that the wolf had been badly wounded, although the bullet had failed to reach a vital spot.

For a time Ich was hopeful that the others would turn upon the wounded wolf, for blood was trickling from its fore shoulder. He had often heard how these maddened animals would turn and rend one of the pack which had fallen before the rifle of a hunter. Apparently the rule was not observed in this instance, for all three still continued frantically in their efforts to reach the boy above them.

When Ich tried to reload his gun he removed the powder horn from his shoulder. He was cramped in his position and suddenly the horn slipped from his hands and fell to the ground directly beneath him.

A low cry of dismay escaped his lips when

Ich became aware of his misfortune. He would no longer be able to fire at the pack and the howling animals, according to tales he had heard, would be likely to remain for many hours at the base of the tree in their efforts to tire out their intended victim.

In spite of the dusk, which now was deeper, Ich was able to see clearly the besieging wolves. It was evident to him that they would not soon leave. The wounded leader seated himself upon his haunches and seldom removed his gaze from the frightened boy. The two other wolves still continued to circle the tree, stopping occasionally in an attempt to lift themselves among the branches. Their efforts were all futile, however, and the frightened boy soon was convinced that he must prepare for a long siege. Doubtless he would be there throughout the night. If the air changed sharply he might become so numb with the cold as to be unable to retain his place on the limb of the tree. The prospect was not promising and a momentary feeling almost of despair swept over the heart of the terrified lad.

Long since the bucket of salted turkeys had disappeared. It was plain that the wolves were ravenous. Fond as they might be of the flesh of the turkeys, they looked with eager,

burning eyes up to the place where their enemy was lodged.

The darkness deepened and soon Ich was aware that night had fallen. Would his brothers, alarmed by his failure to return to Farmers' Castle, set forth in search of him? In that event they too might incur the danger which had befallen him. However, he was confident that, if they did begin a search for him, they would come armed and if he could forewarn them of their peril, they might be able to drive the hungry animals away. Meanwhile, the stars appeared in the heavens, the air became much colder and it was plain that a sharp change in the weather was at hand.

CHAPTER VII

THE TWO BROTHERS

WHEN another hour had elapsed, Ich was thoroughly chilled. His fingers were numb and his toes were aching from the cold. Whenever he glanced below him he was aware that the wolves were still waiting for him to descend. He wondered if they were waiting for the cold to accomplish for them what they had been unable to achieve by their leaps and howls.

The sight was not one to encourage him as he glanced down at the savage animals. Two of them were lying on the snow while the third sat upon its haunches and did not turn away its gaze from the victim they had trapped in the tree.

It was useless for Ich to shout for aid. Farmers' Castle was so far away that his voice could not be heard there and he could not expect any aid from men who might be approaching that place of refuge. Besides, it was late now and provision had doubtless been made in

every blockhouse for the protection of its inmates and the people were asleep.

Ich again glanced below him. The position of the savage animals was unchanged. His arms also were now feeling the effect of the sharp cold and a fresh fear arose in his heart that he might become so numb as the hours passed that he would be compelled to let go his hold and would fall into the midst of the besieging wolves. The thought caused a shudder to pass over him and he clung still more tightly to the branch.

Suddenly he was aware that there was a slight commotion among the wolves. The two that had been lying down now arose and, like the one that had been seated on its haunches, sniffed the air and whined. Had they become aware of the approach of enemies—men or beasts? The question instantly arose in Ich's mind and he listened intently. Not a sound, however, came to his ears from the depths of the forest but, as he looked below again, he saw that the uneasiness among his savage besiegers was increasing.

At that moment Ich saw, issuing from the midst of the trees, the shadowy forms of three men Against the background of the snow they were clearly visible as they cautiously approached. They were coming from the direc-

tion of Farmers' Castle and a throb of hope filled Ich's heart when he was convinced that he was not mistaken. Surely they were coming to his aid.

Placing his numbed fingers together he emitted the sharp and prolonged whistle which was recognized by his brothers whenever it was heard, as the "call" of the Taylor family. Instantly he saw the approaching men stop and was convinced that his brothers were near. Doubtless both Ben and Phin were coming to his aid. It was impossible for him to determine who the third member of the party was.

Quickly the three approaching men broke into a run and as they came nearer Ich shouted in his excitement, "Look out! Look out! I'm up in a tree here and there are three big timber wolves right at the bottom! They have penned me in!"

As soon as he had spoken Ich looked below at the wolves. They had not fled from the spot but they were walking about the base of the tree in a manner that betrayed their uneasiness. Occasionally one of them whined and several times the leader ran a few steps from the place and sniffed the air as if he was alarmed.

However, when the three approaching men had drawn near enough to enable them to per-

ceive the forms of the wolves, there was a quick report from their rifles. The targets at which they were aimed were somewhat indistinct because the men shot before they drew near the tree. It was speedily manifest that at least one of the wolves had been hit for a loud howl was raised. For a moment the other two wolves manifested increasing uneasiness and then as if at some preconceived signal they broke from the place and sped swiftly toward the forest.

"There they go! They've run away!" shouted Ich. "They are making for the woods, off to your left. There are two of them. Don't let them get away!"

As soon as the lad had spoken, one of the party turned sharply about and ran swiftly in the direction Ich had indicated. The other two men at once approached the base of the tree in which Ich had found a place of refuge. One of them, whose voice the lad recognized as that of his brother Phin, called sharply, "Are you all right, Ich?"

"Yes, I'm all right. Just a little cold," replied the prisoner.

"Can you come down alone or do you want me to help you?"

"I think I can make it," answered Ich as he began to climb down.

The boy was much more numb than he had been aware until he began the descent from the tree. His fingers were purple and he was hardly able to use them. Indeed once or twice he almost fell from the limbs, but by a great effort he retained his hold and soon found himself standing upon the ground with his two brothers near him.

"What was the trouble?" demanded Phin.

"Wolves mostly," replied Ich sharply, as he thrashed his arms about his shoulders striving to renew the circulation. "They must have got the scent of my turkeys for I hadn't come very far from our place before they were after me. I left my sled and tub and made for the tree and it was lucky for me that I did. I thought one of them would climb right up after me. He certainly tried hard enough and almost succeeded."

"How long have you been here?"

"I don't know. It seems like a month of Sundays."

At that moment they heard the sharp report of a rifle discharged not far away and all three listened intently as Phin exclaimed, "That's Big Joe. He took after those wolves that ran when we got sight of them."

Meanwhile Ben had examined the sled and the tub which had recently contained the salted

turkeys. "They got everything!" he exclaimed ruefully. "You wouldn't think they could hold so much."

"They certainly seemed to be just as hungry as ever when I looked down and saw them staring up into my face," added Ich.

"Well, they're gone now," said Phin, "and we'll take the sled and go on back to the Castle. Do you think you can make it, Ich?"

"Of course I can make it," retorted the boy quickly. "I'm just a bit numb from the cold. As soon as I begin to walk I'll be all right."

"Shall we wait for Big Joe?" inquired Ben.

In response Phin placed his hands about his mouth and emitted a prolonged call.

To the joy of the boys the call was answered and in a brief time Big Joe was seen approaching. "They got away from me," he exclaimed. "I fired at them but I didn't have a good mark. I'm afraid I missed 'em both."

"We'll look 'em up in the morning," said Phin.

As they made their way back toward Farmers' Castle, Ben explained to his younger brother that no one had felt any anxiety over the failure of Ich to return to the blockhouse until after the sun had set. Then as he failed to appear their anxiety increased with every passing moment. At last, at the suggestion of

Big Joe himself, the three had armed themselves with heavy rifles and set forth in search of him. In spite of the peril in which Ich had been placed by the savage animals, his brothers were somewhat relieved to find that it was *only* wolves with which he had had to deal.

Although they did not explain in detail, all, including Ich, understood that their great fear had been of Indians who might either have made Ich a prisoner or have shot him. Most of the attacks by the Indians, however, were made in the daytime or just before the morning sun appeared.

The feeling of relief when it was discovered that Ich had not been attacked by the Indians had in a measure belittled the danger in which he had been placed by the pursuing wolves. Ich himself declared that, if help had not come, he did not believe he would have been able to maintain his place of refuge in the tree until morning.

It was late in the afternoon when at last the little party, headed by the hunter, arrived at Farmers' Castle. There were evidences of excitement about the place which aroused the newcomers until at last Ben exclaimed in a low voice, "There's nothing wrong. It looks as if they were getting ready for a dance."

When the boys entered within the walls they

discovered that Ben's words were true. A fiddler from Gallipolis had been engaged and the Frenchman was already going through many of his motions with the bow, although the dance itself was not to begin until after darkness had fallen over the land.

"I'm not going in," said Ich.

"No wonder," retorted Ben. "You're not old enough."

Ich turned in scorn upon his brother but the threatened attack was avoided by the intervention of Phineas. "Never you mind, Ben," said his older brother. "You leave Ich alone. In my opinion he will be one of the most popular people at the party."

Although Ich tried quietly to enter the fort in order to avoid comments or questions by his friends, he soon discovered that the report of his adventures had spread throughout Farmers' Castle. When he first appeared after supper, although candles were burning in the room, he was immediately besieged with questions by his friends and it was difficult for him to conceal his feeling of mortification. Somehow he had a conviction that he was looked upon by the other residents as one who had failed in his task and had been the victim of his own lack of courage.

However, as the story spread and the ques-

tions continued, a part of his bashfulness wore away and before the evening ended he was almost persuaded that he had been a hero of some kind.

Among those who were in attendance at the festivities were parties of young people who had come from Ft. Harmar. The days were so monotonous and the constant peril of attacks by the Indians had so worked upon the nerves of the settlers that any relaxation was welcome. Besides it was not feared that attacks would be made upon parties that were well protected or sufficiently large to insure protection against the prowling Indians.

In spite of Ich's returning courage, however, he took no part in the festivities. In amazement he looked at his brother Ben who ordinarily was so quiet and retiring that it was difficult for him to talk to a stranger. Ben, however, apparently was enjoying himself to the utmost. When the figures were called Ben was always to be seen among the foremost. He was totally unresponsive to the taunts of his younger brother who made faces at him or saluted his approach with questions which he knew must be embarrassing.

However, even the arms of the fiddler as well as the strength of the dancers at last began to show the effects of the evening. Before mid-

night the party broke up and those who had journeyed to Farmers' Castle from the nearby forts or distant homes prepared to return in as large companies as could be formed. Shouts and calls followed them as they left the palisades and promises were given that the evening soon would be repeated.

On the following day while Ich and his brother Phin were walking along the inner court of the Castle, they were halted by Sergeant O'Brien, a good-natured Irishman, the officer of the day. His face beamed as he greeted the boys, an expression, however, that was commonly seen whenever he stopped to converse with any one. He was the personification of good nature and popular among all the people, young and old.

"It's some one we must have for to go to Red Stone—" he began.

"And so you stopped us," laughed Phin.

"I'm thinking that you might just as well go as any one."

"What are we to go for?"

"We've got to get some salt and either get some more salt-meat or arrange for some more to be brought here. We are having our troubles to feed all those hungry souls."

"We shan't be able to bring very much salt and we surely can't bring meat that will amount

to much among two hundred and twenty-five people."

"But you can make arrangements for it," persisted the Sergeant, "and I'm thinking you will have to go. Most of the boys have been out on this work and it's about time for you to take your turn."

"Ich, here, did his stunt," laughed Phin. "He went over to our place to get some salted turkeys but the wolves got after him on his way back and, what's more, they almost got him."

"They surely got the turkeys," suggested Ich dolefully.

Phin laughed as he said, "You know those wolves drove Ich straight up a tree. He says they followed after him but I never heard of wolves climbing trees, did you, Sergeant?" Phineas winked as he smiled at the young officer of the day.

"I can't say that I did, sir," responded O'Brien demurely. "Leastwise I have never had any experience."

"Then all I can say is that you're wrong," broke in Ich. "Those wolves did their very best to get right up into the beech tree where I was. When they hung on to the branches, sometimes I thought they'd get a grip to pull themselves up as far as I was."

"But they didn't," broke in Phin with a laugh.

"Not quite," acknowledged Ich. "It's all very well for you fellows to stand here and laugh about it but if you had been where I was and looked down into those wide open jaws that were so red they seemed to be on fire, I guess you wouldn't have laughed."

"No, I don't think we would," acknowledged Sergeant O'Brien. "You must have had a hard time of it. But it is just because you have had some experience that I want you to go with Phineas here and carry this message to Red Stone. You will have to be on the lookout too, for there are reports that the redskins are prowling all around here."

"Do you think it's necessary to go?" inquired Phin anxiously.

"I do, sir."

"What does Captain Rogers think about it?"

"He says that it is absolutely necessary for some one to go and the sooner he goes the better it will be for every one."

"Then there's nothing else for us to do, Ich, is there?" inquired Phin. And he turned to his younger brother and spoke, "We must do our part."

"I'm ready to start right now," spoke up Ich promptly.

Indeed the opportunity to go with his older brother on an expedition of this kind appealed strongly to the lad. To him most of the desirable knowledge was contained within the head of Phin and what his brother was able to accomplish exceeded all bounds in the imagination of Ich.

"I will count on your being ready, then, at the meeting place before sun-up to-morrow morning," said O'Brien, as he turned to pass on.

"We'll be ready and we'll be there," replied Phin quietly.

True to his words, early the following morning Phin and his younger brother reported at the appointed place and after a few words of explanation and a solemn warning had been given them by Captain Rogers, they slipped out of the gate and started through the pathless forest for their destination. Each messenger carried a small pack upon his back containing food for the day. Red Stone was about six or eight miles distant and the journey was not considered one that would unduly test their endurance. The chief anxiety arose from the fact that spies had recently reported numerous evidences of the presence of Indians in the vicinity. Although organized attacks by the red men were not often made in winter, never-

theless there was a continual prowling attack made upon the lonely settlers until a feeling of anxiety had spread throughout the entire region.

Both boys were equipped with rifles and each had a well-filled powder-horn and a pouch of bullets. Perhaps the younger boy's courage was stronger because of his confidence in his older brother. At all events Ich was in high spirits, although his brother had not spoken to him after their departure from Farmers' Castle until they had penetrated a half mile or more within the adjacent forest.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SKATERS

AS the boys moved through the silent woods, the trees stood out darkly against the banks of snow that were to be seen on the hillside. The fall of snow had not been heavy and the wind had scattered it so that there were many stretches that were bare.

The very silence of the great forest had so strong an effect upon the boys that by common consent they stopped for a moment to glance from tree to tree, each fearful that he might discover the presence of a hiding or prowling Indian.

"There have been lots of reports lately that the redskins are going to move on the Castle," suggested Ich in a low whisper as he glanced timidly behind him.

"Yes," assented his brother. "Ever since we went to the Castle they have been telling that the Indians were coming. I suppose they will come some time."

"What I'm afraid of is that they'll come when we don't expect them."

"They'll do their best, but with such men as Big Joe—" Phin stopped abruptly for approaching from the forest the boys saw the hunter himself drawing near. Evidently he was aware of their presence and moved swiftly toward them.

When he halted he glanced first at one boy and then at the other as if he was expecting one of them to explain the cause of their presence in the forest on that winter day.

"We're going to see if we can get some salt and salt meat," explained Phin.

"Where're you goin'?" inquired the hunter.

"To Red Stone."

"You've got a full day's journey before you get there, even if you're lucky enough to make your way all right."

"What's wrong? What do you mean? Have you seen any Indians?" inquired Ich eagerly.

"Yes, to all your questions," answered Big Joe. "What I want you boys to do is to take these skates with you."

As he spoke Big Joe took from his shoulders two pairs of skates which were hanging from the deer thongs by which they were fastened.

"I've got my own skates," explained the hunter, "and I brought the Corporal's with me

because he is cutting back to the Castle across lots. He is in a hurry because he goes on duty to-night. You take both these pairs because you may need them before you get back.''

''We shan't need them if we go through the woods,'' declared Phin.

''So you won't,'' admitted the hunter, ''but you ought to make part of your way up the river. The river is all frozen over and you'll make much better time and besides you'll be safer if you go that way.''

''Is the skating good?'' inquired Ich who was elated by the suggestion of his friend.

''Pretty good,'' replied Big Joe. ''The ice is a little thin in spots. Of course there are some rough places, but even then you'll make better time than you could if you were trying to force your way through the woods.''

Big Joe repeated his words of warning, although neither of the boys required any further instructions to cause them to be vigilant on their way.

As they moved forward the scene about them became still more impressive. Here and there were huge maples on whose branches snow and ice were glistening. The surface of the drifts which they occasionally found were frozen over, reflecting the rays of sunlight as they came through the branches of the trees. The si-

lence, however, that rested over the entire region was far more impressive than any of the objects that greeted the eyes of the boys.

"We can't be more than a half mile from the river," suggested Phin after the boys had resumed their journey and had moved at least a mile through the woods. "Our best plan will be to put straight for the bank."

"I'm agreed," answered Ich. "We can make a good deal better time when we put on our skates."

Ich was eager not only to depart from the woods, but also to don the skates which the hunter had given them. Among his companions he was looked upon as an expert on the ice and consequently he enjoyed the winter sports as much as any boy in Farmers' Castle. Already there had been contests between the boys who had boasted of the merits of their sleds and these had been followed by games that were not unlike the modern hockey, when the younger refugees from the Castle had put on their skates and joined in the games on the ice of the nearby river.

As soon as the brothers arrived at the bank their first activity was to scan carefully the surface of the frozen river. Although they peered keenly in either direction, not a man nor any moving creature did they discover in the scene

before them. Apparently they were the only living objects on the bank of the stream at the time.

In silence they adjusted their skates and the enthusiasm of Ich increased as he began to "cut capers" and figures on the ice which, in the little cove where they now were, was smooth and strong. "This is the way!" he called to his brother, as with long and powerful strides he darted toward the middle of the stream.

"Don't go out there!" called Phin warningly. "We better keep fairly near this bank."

"That may be all right," Ich retorted to his brother. "But if there should be any redskins on this side of the river they would have no trouble in seeing us. They could get after us, too."

"That's all right," said Phin. "But we might want to make for the shore and if we were out in the middle of the river we might have our troubles before we got to the bank."

As the younger boy assented to the suggestion of his older brother in whose word, as we know, he had unbounded confidence, they increased the speed at which they were moving and soon were making most excellent time as they proceeded up the stream. For an hour or more not a word was spoken and no sound was heard except the ring of the runners of

their skates as the boys moved swiftly forward.

The skates themselves were of the old-fashioned kind but were highly tempered and sharp. The runners had been forged by hand in the smithy at Farmers' Castle and were made under the direction of Big Joe himself. They were formed of highly tempered steel and it was the pride of the hunter's heart that he kept them in condition for work at any moment their services might be required. For, among the refugees at Farmers' Castle, skating was not a pastime but was one of the means by which help might be had or provisions obtained in time of need.

When the two lads arrived at a point of land that jutted out into the river they decided that they would go ashore. They had proceeded over the ice as far as it was possible in the journey they were planning to make, and, somewhat familiar with the region, they were positive now that they could make better time to their destination by proceeding through the forest. They were both confident that there was no danger of losing their way and their interest increased as they drew near the place they were seeking.

When they removed their skates and hung them about their necks and climbed the bank and entered the forest, the same silence that

had been so oppressive before now seemed again to rest upon them both. Each was aware that the other was exceedingly watchful and each suspected his brother of being afraid.

In view of the reports which had come of the activities of the Indians during the winter the fear of the boys was natural. They were fully aware of the perils that beset the hardy settlers from the boldness of the tribes whose anger had increased with every passing year that the white men had stayed in a territory which the red men believed to be their own. Whenever a man or boy departed from the Castle the last words he heard were to advise him to take redoubled precaution in the midst of the dangers that surrounded him.

Both these boys were sturdy and not unduly timid. They were aware, however, of the perils that threatened them and accordingly adopted measures of precaution that would have seemed strange to one who did not understand their meaning. Instead of moving swiftly in a straight line they darted from tree to tree as they proceeded along the shore. Their plan was to move to the shore of the bay directly ahead of them and then, skating again to the main shore, strike directly across the country toward the place they were seeking.

When, however, they gained the shore on the opposite side of the little promontory, they were startled when they beheld three Indians on the ice apparently skating directly toward the place where the boys were standing.

"Let's go back where we were," suggested Ich hurriedly.

"No, no," responded his brother. "Get behind a tree. We've got to see what these redskins are up to."

Almost fascinated by the sight, Ich, who quickly followed the directions of his brother, gazed from behind the tree where he had taken refuge at discovery of the approaching red men. It was evident that all three were excellent skaters. Their strides were swift and the movements of their bodies were graceful as they came swiftly forward.

"They're going to pass us!" exclaimed Phin as the Indians showed no sign of changing their course.

The hope of the boys, however, was speedily dashed when the three Indians sweeping in nearer the shore and moving swiftly down the river soon were aware of the marks which the skates of the two boys had made on the ice. Instantly the red men paused and a hasty consultation followed. Two of them were pointing excitedly toward the marks on the ice and

both boys, who had moved from their former positions, and now were watching the actions of their enemies, were aware of their peril.

Quickly the Indians turned toward the shore, following the marks of the skates, and it was soon evident also that they had discovered traces of the movements of the boys as they had run swiftly across the little promontory.

Apparently capture was certain. The Indians, although they were moving cautiously, had taken off their skates and were advancing across the promontory. All three were armed and it was plain that they were eager to overtake their foes whose trail was fresh and recent.

"Come on!" called Phin in a low voice. "They'll get us as sure as fate if we don't clear out."

"Where'll we go?" inquired Ich.

"There's only one place for us," answered Phin, "and that's the river. Come on as fast as you can. Don't make any noise. We'll have to use our skates and of course they'll fire at us before we've gone very far but we may get a good start."

"Shall we go up or down stream?" inquired Ich, as he quickly and silently followed his brother, as Phin darted down the bank.

"Go back the way we came," replied Phin. "There's a chance that we may find some one

to help us if we get into trouble. It'll be more likely to come from that direction than the other."

The brothers now were on the ice and hastily strapped on their skates. In spite of their excitement there were no false motions and in a brief time they arose and as Phin led the way they started with long strides in the direction from which they had recently come. Every moment they were expecting to hear the shout of the Indians or the report of a gun. They had, however, advanced a hundred yards or more before the Indians discovered their flight. Then a wild shout arose from the three red men and as Ich glanced over his shoulder he saw them run swiftly down the bank of the river.

It was known that many of the Indians were marvelous skaters. Races between the white men and the red in the days before wars had broken out were not infrequent, and it was also reported that the Indians had frequently won in the exciting contests.

Over his shoulder each of the brothers had slung his rifle and this now somewhat impeded the swiftness of the flight. However, their efforts redoubled as soon as they discovered that the Indians were in pursuit and when at last their enemies had gained the ice and adjusted

their skates, they had more than doubled the distance between them. Both boys were good skaters and there was an incentive now such as they never had had before to move swiftly. The metallic ring of their skates was the only sound for a time that broke in upon the silence of the afternoon. Phin directed his brother not even to glance behind him as not one motion that in any way might impede their progress was to be made. All their strength and every effort were to be combined upon maintaining the swiftness of their flight.

Not a shot had been fired at them as yet, for it was plain that the red men were depending upon their speed to overtake the fugitives and were plainly confident that soon they would make prisoners of them both. Phin, who was the natural leader, had unconsciously been cutting their course in nearer the left bank of the river. His plan was that, should they be in danger of being overtaken, he and Ich would abandon their skates, make for the shore, and seek some place of refuge among the great trees of the forest.

They had found several rough stretches of ice that had somewhat impeded their progress but inasmuch as their pursuers were compelled to cross the same stretches, the relative distance between them did not decrease, for the

boys were greatly elated to discover that as yet their enemies had not perceptibly gained on them.

A fresh call from Phin for his brother to increase his efforts was followed by a quick response from Ich, but the latter exclaimed in a low voice as they moved swiftly forward, "They're gaining now, Phin. I don't think we can hold out much longer."

Phin, however, did not reply, and Ich said no more, as he reserved his strength for maintaining his position by the side of his brother.

They were now within fifty feet of the shore. Unknown to the boys there was a rift in the current there which had made the ice thinner and much more brittle. Phin shouted in terror when he suddenly perceived directly in front of him and only a few yards away an open space in the ice. The swiftly flowing waters were plainly visible and Phin instantly swerved from the course he had been following.

The warning, however, had come too late for Ich. Driving ahead as he was and exerting his strength to the utmost, he had not checked his speed until the warning call of his brother had been heard. Almost immediately with the loud shout of Phin, there was a crash in the ice and Ich suddenly pitched forward and disappeared from sight beneath the dark waters of the river.

CHAPTER IX

THE SPELLING CLASS

PHIN instantly stopped sharply in his course and, horrified by what had befallen his brother, dashed swiftly toward the open ice. Even the pursuing Indians were forgotten now and every thought was centered upon the tragic mishap to Ich.

Quickly his younger brother rose to the surface, but, as he grasped the edge of the ice, to Phin's horror the fragile ice gave way and Ich once more disappeared beneath the water. The current of the river at this time was swift. Phin saw the dark waters as they swept under the ice and the great fear in his heart now was that Ich would be drawn beneath the surface and held there until rescue would be impossible.

Although Phin had ignored the presence of their pursuers in the great fear which had swept over him at his brother's accident, he nevertheless was aware as for a moment he looked up the stream that three other men were approaching on skates. From their movements he instantly concluded that they

were whites, but it was difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish at the distance, between the scouts from Farmers' Castle and the red warriors from the forest. Many of the scouts were painted like Indians, both as a disguise and as a protection. Phin, however, was too excited to wait for an investigation and swiftly skated along the border of the ice waiting to obtain another glimpse of Ich. In a moment the boy appeared once more and again made desperate attempts to obtain a grip on the ice. Once he nearly drew himself up on the surface, but the ice gave way and he was plunged again into the river.

Glancing once more in the direction of the men whom he had seen approaching Phin shouted in his loudest tones for help. At the same time he threw himself flat upon the ice and cautiously yet swiftly crawled forward toward the spot where his brother might next appear. A large woolen scarf which he had worn around his neck he now freed and holding it in such a manner that he could cast it toward his struggling brother he continued his efforts. An ominous cracking sound warned him that it was not safe for him to proceed. Ich had appeared again and was desperately attempting to obtain a hold upon the treacherous ice.

"Careful! Be careful!" shouted Phin.

"Just hold on enough to keep yourself from being drawn under and I'll soon get you."

Whether or not Ich heard the warning of his brother, he was more careful and instead of trying to lift himself out of the river he simply clung to the ice which now apparently supported his weight.

At that moment Phin was aware that the men whom he had seen approaching were drawing near. Evidently they had seen the mishap and had swiftly changed their course to render such help as lay within their power. Phin was aware also that one of the trio was Big Joe. It was difficult for him to understand how the hunter had returned so quickly from the place where he had left him in the forest.

There was no time, however, for conjectures or questions, and the hunter sharply called, "Hold on, Ich! We'll get you out all right. Be careful! Don't break the ice. We'll get you all right, lad."

Turning quickly to Phin, Big Joe directed him to remain where he was and then one of the white men stretched himself upon the ice, and grasped Phin's feet. A second followed his example in casting himself upon the ice and seizing the feet of his friend in front of him, while Big Joe remained in the rear, holding sturdily to the second of his companions. In this way a

living chain was formed and Phin was directed to cast his muffler toward his brother, meanwhile holding strongly to one end.

The ice apparently was strong enough to bear the weight of all four, and, hastily acting upon the suggestion, Phin shouted and tossed his muffler.

As Ich attempted to seize the end of the scarf his numb fingers lost their hold upon the ice once more and again he disappeared under the water. He quickly rose again, however, and, although it was manifest that his strength was failing, nevertheless, after a desperate attempt, he once more obtained a firm hold on the ice which had not given way.

Again Phin tossed the muffler and this time Ich succeeded in grasping it. Once more he slipped into the water and Phin's fears increased, for Ich was now so thoroughly chilled that he might be unable to retain his grasp. Steadily and quietly he pulled the lad toward him, then, just as he had hopes that the rescue was accomplished, the ice again gave way, precipitating both brothers into the water.

As Phin rose to the surface he was aware of the desperate grasp of Ich on his arm. It was almost like a death grip and Phin was fearful that the last attempt of his brother to escape would prevent the rescue of both.

However, as he rose he felt the strong grasp of Big Joe upon his shoulder, for the hunter had slid forward and reached the boys. As Ich's hold still continued, in a moment both boys were drawn out upon the ice and were saved from the river.

"We'll start straight back for the Castle," directed Big Joe quickly. "I'll go with the boys," he said to his two companions, "and you keep on for Red Stone."

In spite of the cold from which he was now suffering, Phin said, "There are three Indians down the river. They have been chasing us and that's why we fell in. We were trying so hard to get away that we didn't see the air hole."

"There aren't any here now," said Big Joe, as he glanced in every direction. "They probably went back into the woods when they saw us coming. Now, boys, you keep up with me. I know you're tired, but the only way to keep your hands and feet from freezing is to move fast, so you follow me."

Without any further delay the hunter at once led the way and started swiftly down the stream. The boys did their best to follow and in a brief time, in spite of their condition, they felt a returning warmth and were able to follow closely at the heels of their friend.

"You don't need to go back with us, Joe," suggested Phin, as the hunter dropped back by his side. "We can make it all right if you want to go on with the others to Red Stone. They need salt at the Castle and that's what we had started to get."

"I'll go with you," replied Big Joe sharply. "We'll start right away."

There was nothing more to be said, for Phin was aware that when the hunter spoke in this tone his mind was fixed. Accordingly in silence, broken only by the sound of their skates, they kept on their way.

Ich's gun had been lost in the river, but Phin's, although it was now useless, still was hanging from his shoulder. Their sole protection was the hunter, but somehow both boys felt reasonably safe now that Big Joe was their protector.

When at last they arrived at the place where they were to cross the country, they removed their skates and, with Big Joe leading the way, moved at a slow trot through the woods along the well-known trail. Several times Phin protested that his younger brother was too nearly exhausted to keep up the pace which the hunter had set, but, unmindful of the protest, Big Joe insisted upon their maintaining the speed at which he was running, and about noon all three

were relieved when they saw Farmers' Castle before them.

The scene was one of peacefulness in spite of the somber appearance of the leafless trees and the river beyond the bend. Even when they drew near the walls there were no guards to be seen and for a moment Phin was fearful that something had befallen the inmates. When he recalled, however, that there were two hundred and eighteen people in the place of refuge, he speedily convinced himself that they had little to fear from an attack in broad daylight.

By this time they had approached the large gate, which at their summons was opened two or three feet and they were bidden to enter.

"What's wrong? What's happened?" demanded the corporal who chanced to be on guard.

"Can't you see?" demanded the hunter tartly.

"We fell into the river," explained Phin. "Big Joe helped us out and we have come back to the Castle."

"But where's all that salt?" demanded the corporal. "We haven't a pinch left in the place."

"Your salt will come all right," said the hunter. "Don't be a bit anxious about that, O'Brien."

"It's not me that's anxious," retorted the young corporal. "But the women all over the whole place are running around like all possessed. They want salt—salt—salt."

"They'll get some salt—salt—salt," retorted the hunter. "The first thing to be done is to get these boys into some dry clothes. You go up to your quarters," he directed the brothers, "and if you haven't any deerskin shirts that are soft and dry, I will lend you a couple of mine."

"We'll be all right," said Phin quickly as, leading the way, he started toward the room occupied by Ich and himself.

In a brief time both boys reappeared apparently not having suffered unduly from their adventure of the morning. Ich's face was somewhat pale, but otherwise he showed no effects. The brisk rubbing which his brother had given him had helped to quicken his circulation and now apparently he was almost restored.

"You'll have to go to school this afternoon," suggested Phin.

"Not if I can help myself," retorted Ich.

"You don't want to help yourself," said Phin. "You want to get all you can. When I was as young as you I used to feel the way you are talking, but now I wish I had

taken advantage of every chance I had."

"You're not too old to learn yet," retorted Ich. "I don't want you to forget that you're less than three years ahead of me."

"Three years is a good deal when one is as young as you," said Phin solemnly, quickly warding off the blow which his brother good-naturedly aimed at him.

"I'm going to have something hot to eat and drink first," said Ich, "before I go back to that school. They must be having the afternoon session now."

"Yes, it's past one o'clock," said Phin, glancing at the sky as he spoke. "Come on, we'll go out to the kitchen."

Evidently the visit of the two boys in the kitchen was not unsuccessful for in a brief time both emerged into the court with smiles of satisfaction upon their faces and a repeated reluctance on the part of Ich to follow the suggestion of his brother to go to school.

However, he was at last prevailed upon and entered the large room which had been set apart for Schoolmaster Sprague and about forty pupils. These scholars ranged in age from little tots not more than four years old to long, lanky boys and girls of fifteen or sixteen. The methods of the schoolmasters were like those of the times. Discipline, so-called,

appeared to be the first qualification demanded of a teacher. Indeed, there were times when the older boys found their greatest delight in casting the pioneer teachers out through the windows or through the open doors of the log huts which were the temples of learning. In the present case, however, no attempts had been made upon Schoolmaster Sprague, for his physical prowess was well known throughout the Castle. Besides, the older boys were busied in serving as spies and guards, in cutting wood or looking after the needs of the fortress. A line of boys and girls greeted Ich's eyes as he swiftly entered the room and the schoolmaster paused for a moment in his task as he inquired sharply, "Why were you not in school this morning?"

"Corporal O'Brien sent Phin and me to Red Stone to get some salt."

"Did you get it?" inquired the schoolmaster quickly.

"We did not," answered Ich.

"Why did you fail? Have I not told you that one of the greatest lessons that we strive to impart to our pupils is that they are never to fail?"

"We didn't fail," said Ich.

"But you just said you came back without any salt."

"So we did."

"Then you assuredly failed."

"We fell into the river," explained Ich. "There were three redskins chasing us and we ran right into an air hole before I saw it. At least I ran into it and Phin came in after me."

The interest of all the scholars was keenly aroused and the schoolmaster said, "At all events you are here and you'll please to take your place in the line."

"But I haven't studied my spelling lesson," protested Ich.

"That isn't my fault," answered the pedagogue. "You will take your place at the foot of the line."

Ich shrugged his shoulders as he followed the direction of the teacher and the lesson was resumed.

"Spell phthisic," directed the schoolmaster as he spoke to the pupil at the head of the line.

"Please, Mr. Sprague," inquired Ich from the foot of the line, "what does that word mean?"

"Tell him, tell him," directed the teacher turning to the line of scholars. No one, however, apparently was able to inform the inquisitive lad and the teacher evidently in some confusion said, "You come to my desk after class and I'll explain."

"Mesopotamia," was the next word pronounced by the teacher, but the girl who was standing second in the row leaving out the "i" of the word failed and the boy directly below spelled it correctly and moved up to take the position in the line, while she took the place held by the more fortunate scholar.

"Tintinnabulation," pronounced the teacher. This was spelled by a girl, although from the expression upon the face of the pupil the meaning was by no means clear.

"Isothermal," "plethoric," "hobgoblin," and "providential" succeeded and met with varying fortunes in the line. Several of the scholars changed places before the words were correctly spelled.

"Receive," "deceive" and "perceive" followed, and the confusion in the minds of several as to whether "c" and "i" were properly placed caused still further changes in the line.

"Educational" was the word given to Ich. He missed it, but without any appearance of shame, for there was no place in the line lower to which he could drop.

For nearly an hour the spelling lesson continued, the teacher pronouncing words which had vague, or little, or no meaning at all to the pupils. It was purely an exercise of memory

and, although many of the boys and more of the girls were able to spell many of the difficult words pronounced by their schoolmaster, the words might as well have been in Arabic for any meaning they had for the class.

When at last the spelling school was dismissed and every one turned about in his place and marched to his seat, which consisted of a rude plank on still ruder uprights, a class in arithmetic was called.

As this class was composed of the older scholars, difficult and almost impossible problems were presented and solved in a marvelous manner.

Ich, who was busy working upon his slate striving to solve the sums which were set for the class of which he was a member, was dimly aware of the words of the older scholars and their occasional glances at the long lanky teacher as he sat with ferule in hand as if perpetually he was guarding himself against an unexpected onslaught. This ferule he applied indiscriminately and vigorously whenever occasion required. Frequently the boys that were to be punished were compelled to "toe a crack" in the front of the room and then bend forward to touch a crack slightly in advance of it. The schoolmaster then applied his ferule with gusto and apparent satisfaction. Just

why brains were supposed to be stimulated as a result of such action and memories improved by such punishment was a question left unanswered by the boys of that day and has received no solution even to the present time.

CHAPTER X

THE LOSS OF THE CAPTAIN

FOR a few days the monotony of the life at Farmers' Castle was not broken. There was still the fear of prowling Indians, whose presence frequently was reported by the watching spies and sentries. It was evident, too, that the Indians were unusually active for the time of year. As a rule the red-skinned warriors were quiet during the winter and, if they were to go upon the warpath, they saved all their exertions until the coming of spring.

Ich and his companions now were regular attendants at the school. Indeed, the lad became so deeply interested in his "ciphering" that he spent additional time in working upon problems with which he delighted to puzzle his older brother. There were games, too, into which the boys entered and of which the girls as a rule were merely interested spectators.

A few weeks later, however, there came a great thaw. This had been delayed for some unaccountable reason and did not appear dur-

ing the month of January when it was usually expected and from which it was called a "January" thaw.

It was now March and already most of the snow had disappeared from the hills and only occasional banks were to be seen in some sheltered refuge which had a northern exposure. The ice in the river, too, had broken up and one day the joy of the people at Farmers' Castle was great when they discovered a flat boat slowly making its way up the stream. The joy was still greater when it was discovered that the boat contained a load of provisions which the men had brought from Kentucky.

The monotonous diet, the close confinement, the necessary restrictions for the protection of the Castle had been borne patiently all through the winter, but never before had Ich and Ben known that a winter could last so long. Once they had gone together out of the fort to search for hickory nuts which in the autumn had fallen in the woods and later had been covered with the snow of winter. Their effort, however, was speedily ended when they were startled by the report of a rifle and heard the thud of the bullet as it struck the trunk of the tree beneath which the boys were searching. The "hint," as Ich explained later, that their

presence in the woods was unwelcome to certain people was quickly taken and at the top of their speed both ran for the Castle. Their safe arrival was hailed by their friends but no more did the boys search for the hickory nuts or venture far from the protection of the blockhouses.

The interest of the boys was keen in the arrival of the flat boat from Kentucky. They were busy with their friends in carrying provisions from the rude landing place to the protection of the Castle. Then, too, they had their share of the food, and the flour which had been brought by the visitors provided a welcome change in the monotonous diet of the dreary winter. The two brothers were especially interested in an interview which Big Joe had with one of his friends who was a member of the crew of the flat boat.

"What's new from out yonder?" inquired Big Joe, glancing far down the river as he spoke.

"I reckon it's nothin' new," replied his fellow spy to whom he had spoken. "It's pretty much the same everywhere."

"And what's that?"

"Why, the redskins are getting ready. There isn't any question about that at all."

"When do you expect they'll break out?"

"It looks like an early spring and they'll come when spring comes."

"So you think we must be on the lookout all the time from now on?"

"I shore do."

"Well," replied the hunter thoughtfully, "we're keeping a right sharp lookout and our spies are mighty fine men. Indeed, they're the best lot in the whole crowd here."

When Big Joe spoke of the "crowd" in the Castle he spoke feelingly, for the conditions were indeed almost unbearable. Every threatened family within a radius of several miles, upon the report of prowling Indians or even the rumor of their coming, fled for safety and protection to the Castle. No one had been refused and, though many of the men left their women folk and children while they themselves returned to look after the wants of their cattle and prepare for the warmer days which soon were expected, their absence apparently did not affect the conditions. Both Ich and Ben long since had given up the room in which they had been sleeping with others, and now were spending their nights on the floor of the room which was used for school purposes.

"I'm thinking," continued Big Joe thoughtfully, "that we'll have to make this Castle bigger. The walls are almost bulging now and

new folk are coming every day. Just what the end will be, I don't know; but they're so thick now that a man would be almost afraid to fire his rifle, unless he was in one of the boxes. He might hit a squalling baby or shoot right into a crowd in spite of all he could do. Sometimes the folk here make me think of a swarm of bees. Something will have to be done right soon."

"Maybe you'll swarm like the bees you speak of," laughed his friend.

"I shouldn't be surprised."

Big Joe spoke more truly than he knew and before many of the spring days had elapsed, preparations were made for a second fort which was to be nearly as large as Farmers' Castle.

The interview, however, was rudely interrupted when a man was seen approaching along the pathway that led from the nearby woods. Instantly the hunter began to run swiftly toward the approaching man who was seen to fall, and then, staggering once more to his feet, resume his flight toward the Castle. It was evident to all the beholders that the approaching man had been hurt or that he was well nigh exhausted. The latter condition was found to be the one from which he was suffering when Big Joe at last approached and, throwing his

arm about his friend, assisted him toward the protection of the fort. He was quickly joined by others who helped the hunter lift the man from his feet and together they bore him within the gates.

Naturally Ich and Ben were not behind the other boys of the Castle in their eagerness to discover what the approach of the man meant.

"It's Hi Henderson," whispered Ich excitedly to his brother. "He went out with Captain Rogers. I wonder where the captain is."

Nor were the two brothers the only ones in the Castle who were greatly troubled by the failure of Captain Rogers to return. All knew that he and Hi Henderson had departed from the Castle early that morning and that the purpose of their going had been to search for signs of the presence of the Indians. The very fact that Captain Rogers now had failed to return and his companion appeared to be in such dire difficulties, increased the alarm among the people and speedily the gates were all closed and doubly barred.

When at last Hi Henderson had recovered in a measure from his severe exhaustion and was able to report to his friends what had befallen him, Ich, in spite of the custom for the younger boys to be relegated to a quiet place,

was in the first line of those who were listening to his words.

"It was this way," began Hi Henderson. "The captain and I set out about half past four this morning. We hadn't gone far before we found plenty of signs of the Indians. We found more than we'd seen since the winter started. We kept on till we'd made our circuit and when we came back and struck the cowpath out yonder and were just about a mile away from the Castle, all of a sudden a couple of redskins jumped up from behind a log where they'd been hiding and fired on us. They weren't more than twenty feet away. They hit the Captain and he fell to the ground."

"Why didn't you stand by him?" demanded one of the men sternly.

"'I'm a dead man,' the Captain groaned," explained the spy. "'I'm hit and hit hard,' he said.

"I saw that he was, for he was bleeding hard from his mouth as well as from his side."

"Did they hit you?" inquired the man who had spoken before.

"Not then," answered Henderson. "I was for staying by the Captain no matter what happened. I looked around for the redskins but I couldn't see a sign of them. Right then Captain Rogers said to me, 'Go! Don't wait a

minute, Henderson. I'm a dead man.' I folded his blanket for him and put it under his head and got some water and tried to help him every way I could but right while I was doing that he gave one long breath and was gone. I didn't have much chance to do more than prove that he was really dead when I thought I saw the Indians again. I lit out but I hadn't gone very far before I saw that they were ahead of me. It was plain to me then that they had started on ahead and would be waiting for me when I came along. Of course, they knew all about the path to the Castle.

"Instead of going ahead, I jumped to one side and ran into the gulch back yonder. I didn't get to the end of it though, before I ran straight past the camp which the redskins must have had the night before. There was one there and I might have shot him as easy as falling off a log, but I didn't."

"Didn't he get sight of you?" inquired one of the men.

"I don't reckon he did. I got sight of him and as my rifle hadn't been fired I could have dropped him just as easily as I could have dropped a tom turkey."

"Why didn't you?"

"Because I was afraid I'd give the alarm and I'd get caught somewhere between the

three redskins, so I kept right on past the camp and I'm almost sure the redskin didn't hear me or see me. At any rate I'm here and I've come back to report the death of Captain Rogers."

"We can't do anything to-night," said one of the men as he glanced at the sky. "It wouldn't be safe for any one of us and if the Captain is dead, we can't help him. We'll get a party and go out to-morrow morning and bring in his body. That is, if the varmints have left it there where he fell."

It was about ten o'clock the following day when the little party with which both Ben and Ich were permitted to go started in their search for the body of the fallen Captain. They found the dead soldier where Henderson had reported that he had fallen. Neither of the boys could repress a shudder when they were aware that the body of the daring leader had been scalped and stripped by the Indians. A blanket which the party had brought with them was thrown over the dead body which then was lifted and borne back to the fort by the serious faced friends of the old soldier.

Captain Rogers had been one of the most daring of Morgan's Riflemen in the campaign against Burgoyne in 1777. He and a young Irishman, familiarly known as Tim Murphy,

had been among the best shots in that justly celebrated band. Upon the hunting shirt of every member was a shield on which was rudely scrawled the words of Patrick Henry, "Liberty or Death."

"It's strange," said one of his friends, as the body of Captain Rogers was being carried back to the fort, "that the Captain told me this morning afore he started that he had a bad dream the night afore he started that he was sure something was goin' to happen that day to him that was mighty important."

"Did he think he was going to be shot?" inquired the man's companion in a low voice.

"He said it was either that or some mighty good fortune was goin' to happen to him. He said he never had such a dream without one or the other of those two things coming to him afore the sun set."

"Well, whether it was his dream coming true or not, I'm mighty sorry we've lost him. He was one of our best men."

Silence followed as the little party continued on its way, every man thinking not only of the dead soldier but also of the prowling enemies who might be close on either side of the path. However, when at last they arrived at the Castle, no one had been hurt nor had any Indians been seen, although Ich was very decided

in his statement that he had heard the snapping of sticks on the ground off to the right of the course followed by the little band. As he was only a boy, his words were not taken seriously and the rejoicing of the inmates of the Castle as well as of the returning men was great over their escape from an attack by their foes.

The fact, however, of the loss of the Captain had a depressing effect upon all and when the rude funeral services were held on the following day, the anxiety of every one in Farmers' Castle had been greatly intensified by the death of one of their leaders.

Nor was the effect manifest alone upon the people at Farmers' Castle. All day long the crowded conditions were made still more crowded by the incoming of people from the scattered and distant cabins. Alarm guns had been fired at Fort Harmer as soon as the death of the Captain had been confirmed and a message had been sent telling of his death. The excitement which the alarm made throughout the region was great and was steadily increasing. The rush of settlers for the protection to be had at the Castle daily increased.

People were fleeing toward the refuge bringing with them some of their possessions which they looked upon as of special value. One man, for example, was running with his leather

apron filled with goldsmith's tools and tobacco. One young woman was seen approaching holding a small china teapot in her hand. Doubtless she looked upon this as the most valuable of her possessions. Others who were the owners of china cups and saucers, which were rare among the rude and wooden dishes that frequently had to be carved for table purposes, were bringing these valued possessions with them.

"They might better drop their fancy things and bring something to eat," growled Big Joe not ill-naturedly, as he watched the approaching people.

"Here!" he called suddenly to a young woman who was passing through the gate. Slung over her shoulder was a pillow. "What have you got in there, Mary?" demanded Big Joe.

"Feathers," answered the girl promptly.

"Well, where's your mother?" demanded the hunter sharply.

"Mother? She's still in the cabin."

"What did you leave her for?"

"We didn't leave her. She wouldn't come with us just then. She said she'd be coming a bit later."

"What's the trouble?"

"She said she wouldn't leave the house look-

ing so. Said she had to clear up before she left. We did all we could to get her to come but she just said she wouldn't. She just *had* to set things to rights."

"And do you mean to tell me that all you children have left your mother alone in that cabin?"

"I didn't tell you anything of the kind," retorted Mary sharply. "I just said mother wouldn't come with us. Dan said he would stay right with her till she got ready to come and that she needn't start until she got good and ready."

"She'll be all right then," said Big Joe relieved.

"Of course, she'll be all right," retorted Mary. "If you didn't think we'd look after her then all I can say is, it's not to your credit."

It was plain that Mary's eyes were shining with something more than the thought of leaving home and seeking the protection of the Castle. The hunter apparently, however, was not greatly moved by her anger and turned to peer at another young woman who now was to be seen approaching over the cowpath.

"Of all things!" exclaimed Ich. "What has that woman got in her hand?"

"I can tell you," said the hunter. "She's got a lookin' glass. Everybody is bringing

what he thinks is worth most to him, especially if it's a woman. That's Betsy Wright, and a lookin' glass is the most valuable thing in all the world to her."

"Is she good looking?" inquired Ich.

"No, she isn't," answered the hunter solemnly, "and that's the reason for it all. She's all the time peering into that glass hoping she'll see some change for the better. But I've known Betsy nigh on to three years and I haven't found anything yet to make me think she's ever goin' to find any improvement."

Night soon fell and with the coming of the darkness no more refugees appeared. The manifest anxiety, however, of Big Joe as well as of the sergeant and others who were responsible for conditions at Farmers' Castle, was so evident that when Ben and Ich took their blankets and sought their corner in the schoolroom where they were to spend the night, both boys were confident that events of great importance were overhanging the Castle. In spite of their excitement, however, they were soon asleep and it was not until morning came that they were aware that their fears of the preceding night were not entirely meaningless.

CHAPTER XI

FALLEN

THERE were still many men in Farmers' Castle who had been unable to drive their stock near to the blockhouse. They, therefore, had been compelled to leave their possessions in their former surroundings and daily the men went forth to attend to their wants.

As the winter passed this task was attended with increasing peril. The threats of the Indians, their zeal and manifest determination to attack the encroaching whites, were now so apparent that even the most reckless of the white men seldom visited their homes or went into the forest on their hunting expeditions alone. Repeatedly men had been fired upon and the report of the rifle was the only announcement of the presence of their red-skinned foes. As yet no one from the Castle except Captain Rogers had been killed, although several had had very narrow escapes.

With the coming of spring, the tasks of the settlers became more perplexing. Not only

must their stock be looked after but they must also prepare to plow their tillable fields and make ready for the coming of the warmer days.

Among the people of Farmers' Castle at this time was Waldo Putnam, son of old General Israel Putnam of Connecticut, whose deeds in the Revolution had made his name as "Old Put" familiar to all the people of the colonies. Waldo, with others from Connecticut and Massachusetts, had been drawn westward by the promises of the Land Company and yet in spite of his heritage of bravery was compelled with others to seek the refuge of Farmers' Castle.

Early in the morning, following the events recorded in the last chapter, Waldo Putnam and Nathaniel Little together departed from the blockhouse to milk and feed their cows which were only a half mile distant from the place of refuge. The spot was so near the Castle that no great danger was anticipated in the task in which they had been engaged daily for several weeks.

However, they decided to proceed together and before the people of the little fort were astir they had gone into the woods. When they arrived at the place they were seeking, Waldo took the wooden milking stool and, seating himself beside one of his cows, prepared to

finish his morning task. Nathaniel was to stand as guard and be watchful of the possible approach of their enemies. The sound of the milk in the bucket was all that broke in upon the silence of the morning. The sun had disappeared behind the clouds and there was a dreary aspect to the surrounding woods. To a stranger the scene might not have presented much promise of the spring which was near at hand.

Several minutes elapsed and the silence continued unbroken. Nathaniel was watching some crows that were circling about a spot farther within the forest, apparently excited about some cause that was not manifest to him. The excitement among the crows increased and they were more noisily announcing their feelings. Their movements became swifter and the circles in which they were flying contracted. It was evident that there was something that had aroused their fear or anger, but what it was was still hidden from the eyes of the guard at the milking station.

Suddenly Nathaniel turned to his left and peered intently among the trees. He clearly saw several tufted heads directly above the bushes that intervened between the clearing and the great trees. A second glance was not required to convince him that he had

already discovered the presence of prowling red men.

"Indians! Indians!" he shouted.

Without a moment's delay both men fled from the spot. Waldo emptied the pail which was nearly filled and, shouting to the cows, started them running swiftly and then with Nathaniel he turned abruptly in the opposite direction in his flight. He was too late, however, for at that moment the concealed Indians fired upon him and he fell instantly to the ground.

Nathaniel, however, was running at his utmost speed. As he dashed through the woods he discovered several men approaching whom he recognized as friends from Farmers' Castle. They were plainly going to their clearing which adjoined Waldo's and were startled when they beheld the wild flight of Nathaniel.

A little dog which they had with them began to bark noisily and Nathaniel, as he drew near, motioned with his hands that they were to flee at once from the region. However, the men moved slowly, holding their rifles in readiness for instant use and peering keenly in every direction for the presence of their foes.

They had withdrawn two hundred yards when they perceived, behind some brush fence which marked the border of the clearing, the

heads of three or four watching Indians. Aware that they were discovered the red men leaped to their feet and started in swift pursuit. The chase soon became so keen that there was no opportunity for any one to assist his friend. Each man must look after his own safety and yet somehow the white men managed to keep quite closely together, although at times they purposely scattered somewhat in order to prevent their enemies from obtaining too good a mark.

On and on ran the pursuers and the pursued. For a time it seemed as if neither was gaining upon the other. Over the fallen logs they leaped, darting through the entangling brush and not once turning to look behind them to discover whether or not the Indians were gaining.

In a brief time they came to the border of the ravine which had proved a refuge for the friend of Captain Rogers and leaping over the bank they stumbled and fell and yet somehow arrived safely at the bottom. Then scattering, two of them ran in one direction while their recent companions, turning swiftly to their right, followed the course which led toward Farmers' Castle.

They now redoubled their efforts. Nathaniel's courage increased as he recognized the

familiar spots which indicated that he was now not far from the protection of the Castle. Never before had he longed for its shelter as he did at that moment. He was putting forth every effort and exerting himself to the utmost of his strength. Every breath caused him distress and yet he dared not halt or stop even to look behind him. If he and his companion could only gain the open space that intervened between the Castle and the forest, he thought they would be safe, for the Indians doubtless would not venture beyond the border of the great woods.

Once more he strove to increase the speed at which he was running. Before him he saw the light of the rising sun and it was plain that the refuge he was seeking was not far away. "Come on! Come on!" he called breathlessly to his companion, but still he did not even pause to look behind him to see whether or not his friend was following closely. The chase was almost ended but the opportunity for disaster was still not gone. He must gain the shelter of the little fort.

As Nathaniel and his companion emerged from the forest their presence instantly was discovered by the watch in one of the towers of the Castle. A loud yell from him greeted their appearance and his alarm was quickly

followed by shouts that came from within the stockade.

Convinced that help was near at hand, Nathaniel still did not falter though he was breathing with great difficulty and his feet seemed to be shod with leaden weights. Suddenly he saw before him one of the gates swing open and forth from the Castle darted a half dozen men, all shouting their words of encouragement and running swiftly as they drew near.

Abruptly they halted and, at the word of their leader, who proved to be the hunter, they fired together. At the same time the reports of several rifles from the forest rang out and Nathaniel instantly was aware that his pursuers had followed him even beyond the protection of the great trees. This was an unusual procedure on their part and, in spite of his breathless condition, he was wondering why they had ventured farther than was their custom.

Answering shouts and cries now came from the red men but as Nathaniel drew near his friends and glanced for the first time behind him he was aware that the Indians had regained the protection of the forest and were shouting their cries of defiance from places of safety.

As Nathaniel staggered forward he was caught in the arms of Ben, who together with

his brother had ignored the calls for them to stay behind the stockade and had ventured forth to help the fugitives or at least to gain a position from which they might be spectators of the exciting events that were certain to occur.

Ich now was wild with excitement. The monotony of the long days was at last broken and, yelling in his loudest tones, he darted from one place to another, scarcely aware of what he was doing and twice shot as he saw the forms of the Indians appear on the border of the forest.

The shouting and confusion redoubled when some one called, "The redskins have run! They're making for their camp! Follow me! Let's get every one of them!"

At the call of Corporal O'Brien, who was leading the little force of pursuers, there was a wild rush toward the forest and soon white men and red alike were lost to the sight of the interested spectators in Farmers' Castle.

"You come back with me," said Ich's older brother as the lad did his utmost to follow the men into the woods. "You're not going with them."

In spite of Ich's protests, his brother compelled him to return and Ich was partly mollified when he was permitted to take his rifle

and stand with his brother as a guard on the walls of the old blockhouse.

For a long time the excitement in Farmers' Castle continued strong, but at last after two hours had elapsed and the pursuing party had safely returned, it died away until it was discovered that Major Bradford, who had been one of the pursuing band, had not returned with his companions. As he was lame in one foot, it was feared by his friends that he had been unable to maintain the swift flight of his companions and, if he had stumbled or fallen, there was no question in the mind of any one as to what his fate was.

"We can't leave the Major out there," said Big Joe, to a little group of men who had assembled near the gate. "We'll have to go out and look him up."

"There isn't much use," answered the Corporal. "If Major Bradford hasn't come back by this time, no one will ever bring him back."

"I'm not so sure of that," retorted the hunter. "The Major may be lame but he isn't as slow as some people think he is. If he had half a chance he'd make the most of it. I'm for looking him up."

"Nobody's going to prevent you," retorted the Corporal. "Only if you go, you must understand that some of us are going with you.

We've had enough for to-day when Waldo Putnam was shot."

"But we've got to look up Waldo too," said the hunter. "We can't leave him any more than we can the Major."

"But Nate reports that he was killed."

"Did you say he was *killed?*" asked the hunter, quickly, as he turned to Nathaniel.

"I said he fell to the ground at the first shot," answered young Little. "He didn't move and I took it for granted that he was dead."

"We'll find out whether he is or not, and I'm inclined to let this fierce little fighter go along with us," Big Joe added, as he turned to Ben who was the youngest member of the assembly.

Ben's quick response and evident desire to accompany his friends was so manifest that not even Phin nor the boys' father opposed the suggestions. It was necessary that the defenders of the blockhouse should take many chances and there was no good reason why the boys should be exempt from their share of the peril. Accordingly a half dozen men started at once from Farmers' Castle.

Big Joe had assured them that there were not many Indians in the vicinity and was confident that the party which had attacked and

shot Captain Rogers was the same one which had fired upon Waldo Putnam in the early hours of that morning. As the word and judgment of Big Joe counted for much, no one disputed his statement and all six started swiftly toward the place where Waldo was reported to have fallen.

Not a sign of the presence of their foes did they discover before they drew near the place they were seeking. As they approached they heard the loud barking of a little dog. The sound was speedily followed by loud crying and whining and then ceased abruptly. Ordering his followers to spread out and approach the place in a semicircular advance, Big Joe led the way as he ran swiftly forward.

Peering from behind one of the great trees when they reached the border of the clearing, all were easily able to discern the form of Waldo Putnam stretched upon the ground. Apparently it was lifeless and the report of Nathaniel had been only too true. Near the body was the little dog whose barking had been clearly heard a few moments before. There was peril in advancing into the open clearing but, without hesitating a moment, Big Joe advanced after he had ordered his companions to remain within the shelter of the forest. Although there was danger that he might be a

target for the rifles of the concealed Indians, not a shot was fired.

Big Joe approached the place where his friend was lying and quickly turned and waved to his companions, indicating that Waldo was not living. His companions then joined him and lifting the lifeless body of their friend they withdrew once more to the shelter of the forest, while Big Joe, picking up the body of the little dog, whose noisy barking had been heard only a few moments before, perceived that its life had recently been taken and consequently their foes must be near. Doubtless they were hiding behind the trees and the only reason they did not fire upon the searching party was because they were few in number and fearful of disclosing their hiding place to their enemies.

Once more rejoining his friends, Big Joe said quietly, "Two of you must take Waldo back to the Castle. The rest of you come with me and we'll see what we can find out about the Major."

"Do you think he was shot?" inquired Ben in a low voice.

"Can't say. There's no great hope for him after what we've seen has happened to Waldo. We'll know more in a few minutes. Keep quiet and keep close to me," he directed, as turning

abruptly he advanced into the forest, proceeding cautiously toward the ravine which had provided a measure of shelter for the fugitives only a brief time before.

CHAPTER XII

IN THE CAVE

UNKNOWN to Big Joe and his companions the Major already had succeeded in making his way back to Farmers' Castle. He entered by the water gate, lame, bleeding and almost exhausted. Fortunately he was discovered by O'Brien who rushed forth from the walls to his aid and assisted him when he almost fell to the ground.

Of course his return was unknown to the hunter and his friends who were determined to search the forest carefully in the hope of discovering the missing leader. In view of what already had happened to Waldo not one of them was confident and after they had gone a mile or more from the place where their adventure had taken place, they abruptly stopped when they discovered in the damp snow, which still remained in the hollows, the fresh prints of moccasined feet.

The silence which rested over the forest was not unlike that which had manifested itself

among the searchers. The outlines of the trees were dark and the sky gave promise of a coming storm. In the midst of their uncertainty, however, while all glanced keenly about them to discover traces of their hidden enemies, who could not be far away, Benoni suddenly said, "I'm not going to stay around here any longer."

"What are you going to do?" demanded Big Joe.

"I'm going to visit my traps. There isn't anything more to be found around here. We know what happened to Waldo and I think the Major is either dead or has been taken away captive by the redskins. I'm going to visit my traps if one of you will go with me."

"Don't do it," protested the hunter. "We ought to stick together."

"Not so," retorted Benoni. "I've had all I want of dragging around here through woods. The redskins aren't very far away and probably are watching us right now."

"They'll keep their eyes on you even if you start for your traps," suggested the hunter.

"I'm going to make for the other shore. I shall be safe there and it won't be long before I'll leave all the Indians behind me."

Aware that Benoni's purpose could not be changed, Big Joe no longer protested and

simply said, "If you are determined to go, Benoni, one of us ought to go with you."

"I'll take Ben," said Benoni quickly, "that is, if he's not afraid to go."

The lad looked questioningly at the hunter and as the latter nodded his head, Ben said, "I'm perfectly willing to go, but I don't like to leave the men here."

"They won't need your protection," laughed Benoni, who for some reason had not been as alarmed as his companions had been by the discovery of the footprints in the snow. He had made a large circle in the woods and inasmuch as he had not discovered any other marks to indicate the recent passing of Indians he was now confident that the red men had been in as great a haste to depart from the region after they had shot Waldo as his friends were to escape.

"If you're coming with me, come along," said Benoni.

Taking his rifle Ben followed his companion, although several times he glanced anxiously behind him to discover whether or not Big Joe still approved of his sharing in the venture of Benoni. The latter had declared that it had been more than a week since he had visited his traps and that he could no longer postpone action. Together the two soon passed beyond the

sight of the hunter and his little band and the intervening forest shut out even the possibility of hearing a report of a gun if one should be discharged.

Ben, still anxious, continued behind his friend as Benoni swiftly led the way toward the river.

When they arrived at the bank he drew forth his canoe from its hiding place and held it in position in the water while Ben, in accordance with Benoni's direction, seated himself in the stern of the little craft. With long, powerful strokes, Benoni sent the light little canoe swiftly up the river. The ice was all gone now and, although the water was high and the current swift, apparently there was nothing to impede their progress. The dark clouds sped above their heads indicating that the wind was still blowing strongly. The canoe was moving in a line at least forty feet from the shore and Ben was eagerly scanning the rocks and trees past which they were swiftly moving.

They proceeded in this manner for ten minutes or more when Benoni abruptly ceased paddling and, turning his face toward the shore, listened intently.

"Hear that?" he whispered.

"What is it?" inquired Ben.

"It's turkeys."

"Yes, I hear," said Ben after he had listened a moment in silence. "What are you going to do?"

"We haven't had any fresh meat of any kind for a long time," said Benoni, "and I think we had better land and try to get a few of those birds. They won't have any fat on them, but they'll be a good deal better than the salt pork we've had to have twice a week for the last month. Picking their bones will make a change anyway."

"We can try it," assented Ben, looking at the priming of his rifle as he spoke.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," said Benoni a moment later. "You land me on that bank just ahead of us and then push out into the river."

"I want to go with you," said Ben.

"I'll let you come a little later if I find any turkeys. If I don't find any and if it's only a trick of the redskins to get us to come ashore, then you'll be a good deal better off out here in the river than you would be if you were with me."

"But I don't want to leave you," protested Ben eagerly. "You will be all alone."

"So much the better," said Benoni quietly, "while I'm running round. If both of us go, there'll be just twice as many chances to be

found out. One pair of eyes is just as good as two for a thing like this.''

In spite of Ben's further protests, Benoni insisted upon landing and he paddled the little canoe close inshore and then, leaping upon the bank, held the canoe while he directed Ben to take his place in the bow and paddle toward midstream.

''It might be better,'' suggested Benoni in a whisper, ''if you went clear across to the other shore. I'll whistle for you when I come back and you can then come over.''

''I don't want to do that,'' protested Ben.

''Do as you like then,'' assented Benoni. ''Keep pretty well out from shore whatever you do. In less than a half an hour I ought to be back. I won't try to shoot any turkeys even if I find them. If the birds are really there, I'll come back for you and then two of us will be twice as good as one.''

Unwillingly Ben obeyed and paddled his little canoe about halfway across the stream. He was fully aware that by taking this position he was exposing himself to shots from either shore, but he was unwilling to leave Benoni entirely alone, and, as he was ignorant of conditions on the opposite shore, he decided that the safer as well as the wiser course would be to stop in midstream and be prepared instantly

either to return for Benoni if a call came from him, or to escape to the opposite shore in the event that flight became necessary.

The silence that rested over the river and forest continued unbroken. The current in the stream was swifter than it usually was, for the melting snows had filled the river almost to the tops of the banks. Ben's interest was keen. For several minutes he watched the spot where Benoni had disappeared among the trees, only occasionally glancing up and down the river to discover whether or not his enemies were to be seen approaching from either direction. The silence, however, soon became oppressive. The gentle lapping of the water against the bottom of the canoe when Ben used his paddle to hold the little craft in position was the only sound that was heard.

While Ben waited, his suspense became keener with every passing moment. It was almost impossible for him to estimate the passing of the time. Whether five minutes had elapsed or an hour he was unable to say. In his eagerness, he was keenly alert and now was expecting to discover his friend returning to the shore. The moments, however, still slowly passed and no sign of Benoni was to be seen. It was almost as if he had been swallowed up in the forest and would not again return. Ben's

fears were increasing and he was about to return to the shore and begin a search for his missing friend when suddenly he heard the report of several rifles. These were speedily followed by the discharge of another, and then the unbroken stillness once more rested over the scene.

Alarmed by the sounds which he had heard, and convinced that Benoni was not alone, inasmuch as he had distinctly heard the reports of several rifles, Ben's fears increased. Had Benoni been attacked? Had he fallen as Waldo Putnam had fallen a few hours before this time? Once more Ben thought of the imprint of the moccasins upon the snow and again he was fearful that the red men were present in the nearby forest and perhaps already had killed his recent companion. The fear of the lad was not unnatural, for, if Benoni had fallen, he was alone upon the waters of the river and without doubt the red men would be able to overtake him speedily if he should attempt to escape from the region.

Ben's uncertainty, however, was abruptly ended when he saw emerging from the trees several Indians who in a crouching manner were approaching the shore. Doubtless they were the ones whose guns he had heard a few moments before and the fact that Benoni was

nowhere to be seen indicated only too plainly to the terrified lad the fact that his friend had fallen, and that the Indians had followed his trail back to the shore in the hope of discovering others who might have come with the man whom they had killed.

So vivid was the thought in the mind of the lad that he instantly turned his canoe about and began a wild attempt to gain the farther shore. A loud shout from the Indians only too plainly indicated that they had discovered his presence in the canoe and their actions increased Ben's fears. Two of the red men quickly discharged their rifles and, although Ben heard the sound of one bullet as it struck the water near the canoe, fortunately neither hit him. He was now moving rapidly in his wild attempt to escape.

As he glanced over his shoulder his fears redoubled when he saw that two of the red men were running swiftly up the bank and it was plain to him that they must be racing to obtain a canoe which they might have hidden somewhere along the shore.

In a brief time his fears were confirmed when he saw the two red men emerge from the forest carrying on their shoulders a canoe which they speedily launched and quickly entered. There were now two of them and in his desperation

Ben was convinced that his chances of escape were very frail. The Indians were experienced in the use of the paddle and, as they were men and he was only an inexperienced boy, there seemed no possibility of escaping. Nevertheless the determined boy continued to move as swiftly as he could ply his paddles.

He had not gone far, however, before he was convinced that his efforts would be fruitless, for his pursuers were steadily gaining upon him. By this time Ben had sent his canoe across the river and was near the right bank. Resisting his first impulse to land and trust for safety to a flight into the forest, he decided to go down the stream and not to land until he should be driven ashore by his pursuers.

It was a source of slight comfort when he saw that apparently the one canoe in which his enemies had embarked was the only one in the possession of the red men. No other canoe had been launched, either because there was no other or because the Indians believed that the pursuit would be short and that it would not be necessary to send another in order to overtake the lad who was frantically trying to escape.

There were moments when Ben believed that he was holding his own but this hope was soon

dispelled and he was speedily convinced that if his pursuers continued he must be overtaken within a few moments. Once more he plied the paddle using all the strength of which he was possessed. The water over which he was passing almost seemed to boil, so swiftly was he moving. Ahead of him was a cove or small bay which he had noticed before in his occasional excursions on the river. Not fully aware of what he was doing, Ben was heading directly for this spot.

Suddenly, directly in front of him in the nearby rock, which was huge and projecting far into the river, he saw a large opening and the thought of trying to escape by hiding there instantly seized upon him. It was the work of only a moment to change his course and, as the canoe scraped the side of the rock, Ben was rejoiced when he discovered that it was possible for him to stand upon a slight ledge that projected over the water.

Grasping his gun in his right hand he stepped quickly ashore and gave the canoe a push with his foot as he turned quickly toward the opening he had discovered in the rock. He was well aware that his actions were plainly to be seen by his enemies but the lad was desperate. He certainly would have been overtaken in his flight and it must be almost equally certain, he

assured himself, that escape through the rocks was impossible.

There was no time for deliberation, however, and acting upon the impulse of the moment he advanced swiftly into the opening.

He was startled when he became aware a moment later that he was in the entrance to what seemed to be a large cave. There were two places where there were faint streaks of light appearing which indicated that there was only a slight connection with the world outside. His eyes now were somewhat accustomed to the darkness and he was walking along a ledge that extended at least two feet over the water moving swiftly below him.

As he moved farther within he soon became aware also that his pathway was rising. He had not known of the existence of the cave nor had he any knowledge of what might be farther on. The one wild impulse in his heart now was to escape from his immediate pursuers and he was not without hope that he might discover a hiding place which would provide a shelter, at least for a time.

The darkness seemed to the breathless boy to become more intense as he advanced. He still was able to see that the ledge over which he had been moving extended beyond him and eager to place the greatest possible distance be-

tween him and the entrance he moved rapidly forward. His rifle was still in his hand and he was sure that the powder in the horn which he had slung over his shoulder was dry. His bullet pouch also was well filled but he did not have a mouthful of food and if it should become necessary for him to remain long in the cave he was aware that hunger and thirst would speedily become even more dangerous enemies than the red men who had been pursuing him in their canoe.

The thought of the Indians caused Ben to stop abruptly for a moment while he listened intently to discover, if possible, whether or not his pursuers had entered the cave. Escape apparently was as hopeless as when he had first entered, for there might be entrances ahead of him of which the Indians might know and by taking advantage of them they easily could catch him between them. In a moment, however, this problem was solved for him and in a manner that was as startling as it was unexpected.

CHAPTER XIII

THE WHITE MAN'S QUESTION

BEN now was fearful that he could make no further progress within the cave. His sturdy efforts, together with the intense excitement of his flight, had begun to show their effect. He was breathing hard and crouching low, prepared for flight at any moment.

He stopped abruptly when he fancied that he heard the sound of Indians approaching. He looked toward the entrance but he had advanced so far that it was impossible for him to see it in the dim light which now surrounded him. Not a sound broke in upon the intense stillness. For a moment he had a feeling as if he were being smothered and almost believed that the walls were being slowly pressed together.

Uncertain as to the coming of his foes, he turned and walked cautiously farther within the cave. It was impossible for him to discern whether or not the great hole in the wall be-

came larger as he proceeded, for the light still was not sufficient to enable him to look far in advance. However, the ledge over which he had been walking had now become exceedingly narrow and he was convinced that he would be able to advance only a few feet farther. The projecting stone became so narrow that it seemed to be absorbed in the side of the wall which extended far above him, so that he could not see just how far he was able to proceed.

His fear of the Indians, however, was so great, his recent experience so exciting, and his conviction that some of them already were approaching and even now were between him and the river, cutting off every possibility of escape, was so strong that in his desperation he decided there was no course for him to follow except to go ahead as far as he could. Thoughts of Benoni and of Waldo were still so fresh in his mind and so terrifying as he recalled them that he was almost unmindful of any peril from which he might suffer within the cave except that of being captured by his red-skinned foes. Anything was preferable to that.

In his desperation he decided that, although he must proceed farther within the hill, he should now abandon the ledge which was not more than twelve inches wide where he was standing. Instantly he seated himself and slid

into the water. He was doing his utmost to protect his rifle, which he was holding high above his head.

He was greatly surprised when he found that the water into which he had stepped came only to his knees. Its shallowness and the fact that it was intensely cold were the most real of his impressions. Cautiously he advanced, striving to make sure of his foothold with every step. Soon the water became deeper and rose to his waist. It was still intensely cold, apparently much colder than the water of the river outside.

In his fear that he might not be able to advance in the deeper water, he was surprised when once more the ground beneath his feet indicated that the water was becoming shallow again. Unless he was greatly deceived, there was also an increasing light in the cave. The question instantly arose as to whether or not there was a break in the side of the cave through which he might perhaps escape to the outside of the hill. In the hope that he might find this conjecture to be true he pressed forward with renewed hopefulness until he gained a place where the water barely covered his feet.

Here he stopped once more and peered anxiously behind him. Were the Indians still following him? That they must have seen him

when he fled to the cave was unquestionable. It was probable also that they were familiar with the interior of the cave in which Ben now found himself. If that were true then there might be approaches of which they might avail themselves and that would enable them to fall upon him when he had no visible means of knowing of their presence. He dared not attempt to retrace his way for fear of the Indians who might be between him and the exit. Even if there were none of them within the cave, doubtless some were watching outside and their discovery of his attempt to escape would be greeted by shots from their rifles.

Ben was so fully convinced that certain of the red men had entered the cave and now were between him and the possibility of escape by the entrance that once more he decided that his sole hope lay in advancing. Accordingly he frantically resumed his wading and proceeded swiftly in the direction from which now steadily increasing light was seen. Indeed, this light became stronger with every passing moment. The troubled boy was able to see his hands before him and, as he looked about the cave, he became aware that instead of becoming narrower the space had opened up until he was moving through what might have been a great chamber in a hall. Not far before him

the shelf or ledge disappeared entirely. A wall of sheer rock rose on his right, but he was unable to see distinctly what was on the opposite side of the stream.

He looked up the steep side and tried to determine whether or not he would be able to climb it. For a moment he was hopeless and then once more recovering his courage he decided to try, although he was still without knowledge of what success might bring him.

Fortunately he found a foothold and though twice he slipped backwards in his efforts to climb, at last he raised himself by grasping a projecting stone and then placed his feet upon a ledge which before he had not seen. His eyes now were more accustomed to the darkness and he was able to see above him. There were other projections also leading up to an opening through which the light was pouring.

The opening apparently was sufficiently large to enable him to crawl through it and in a new spirit of determination he once more renewed his efforts and did not cease his attempts until at last he had gained the opening he desired. His hands were torn and bleeding, the moccasins on his feet provided only a slight protection against the sharp stones, but unmindful of his pain Ben resolutely held to his task and at last stood in the open space.

The exit was not as wide as he had thought, but without much difficulty he contrived to squeeze through the narrow opening between the walls. In a brief time he found himself outside the hill and in his excitement he stopped to peer intently all about him.

As he glanced behind him he was confident that the opening into the hill at some time had been enlarged by men. There were marks on the walls as if they had been made by axes or sledge hammers and it was also plain that some one had been working at the place very recently. There were fresh tracks among the chipped stones and to the troubled boy it seemed as if the Shawnees must have been preparing for a hiding place if a new uprising of the Indians were soon to occur.

Although Ben many times had been up and down the river he had not seen the opening into the cave until his flight. Nor had any one ever told him of the place. Now, after he had made his way successfully through the underground passage-way and had found evidences that disclosed the knowledge his enemies had of the hiding place, it was easy for him to understand that the Indians doubtless were planning to make special use of this cave which extended more than one hundred fifty feet beneath the hill near the shore.

Ben, however, had no time nor opportunity to consider these matters, inasmuch as his supreme purpose now was to escape from the region. He was positive that the Indians in the canoe who had followed him would not easily abandon their pursuit. Doubtless they also knew of the cave and of the exit on the hillside. If that were true then they must have prepared to overtake him when he attempted to escape.

The thought renewed Ben's alarm and he glanced quickly all about him. On the hillside the maples and the beeches had grown to a considerable size. In the valley below there were spots in which the snow still remained. Chilled by the cold water through which he had waded, wearied by his recent efforts to escape, Ben still was determined not to give up but to do his best to get away from the region. Cautiously he advanced, moving slowly from tree to tree and all the time proceeding down the hillside. In the narrow valley below there might be opportunities for hiding and he was positive that in his efforts to free himself he would meet with fewer obstacles than if he should try to move along the side of the hill.

He had moved out from a clump of five or six trees that were growing closely together and was beginning to hope that he was not seen by

any lurking foes when abruptly he was hailed by four Indians and a man who, although he was dressed like his companions, was nevertheless evidently a white man. Quickly the little band surrounded Ben and the white man spoke. It was difficult for Ben to understand him and even in his alarm he thought that in all probability the white man had been living so long among the Indians that he had in a measure lost his use of the tongue in which he was born.

"Who are you?" demanded the white man.

"My name is Ben," replied the boy quietly.

"Where do you come from?"

"I just came through the cave."

"I know, I see," growled the man. It was evident to Ben that he had no mercy to expect from the leader of his captors. The face of the man was brutal and its appearance indicated that it had been long since he had applied water to that part of his anatomy.

"I know, I know," repeated the man, "but where were you going? Where did you come from?"

"I came from Farmers' Castle."

"What were you doing?"

"We had heard that a couple of our men had been killed by the red men and we went out to look up their bodies and bring them back to

the Castle. While we were doing that a lot of redskins set upon us and I just managed to get away."

"Did they chase you?"

"Yes. A canoe was after me, but I found the opening to the cave and hid in there."

"Who were the Indians?"

"Shawnees."

The white man turned and spoke to his companions, but Ben was unable to understand what he was saying. Once more facing the lad the white man said, "Do you know how to build a hut?"

"I can try."

"Have you ever built one?"

"Yes, my brother and I made one and slept in it a good many nights when we were out hunting."

The white man was silent for a moment as he looked sternly, almost savagely, at the boy and then he said, "Where do you live? What is your name?"

Ben described the place which his father and his brothers had settled, but before he had finished the white man again broke in savagely, "Yes, yes, I know. The Ohio Company was supposed to own that land. They don't own a foot. You have no business there or anywhere else in this part of the country. Why

don't you go back beyond the Alleghenies where you belong?" Then his expression changed quickly and he renewed his question, "I was asking you if you knew how to build a hut."

"I told you I would try."

"You'll have to do more than 'try.' You'll have to *do* it. I promised my Indian squaw that I would bring back a white man who would build her a hut. You're only a piece o' man, but if you can do that for her it will be a good thing for you."

"I'm willing to do my best," answered Ben soberly. He was well aware of the glances which came from his Indian captors and was in no way deceived by the apparent interest of the white man who was the spokesman for them all.

"We may be a bit easier with you," declared the white man, "if we find you can do what you say. Of course we can't do much till we know. You'll have to come along with us and mind you don't try any tricks, or it'll be worse for you."

Whatever hopes Ben might have had concerning easy treatment by his captors, because of questions of the white man, were speedily dispersed when his gun was taken from him and a long leathern strap or rope

was adjusted to his neck while his hands were tied behind him. The long rope was fastened to the arm of one of the Indians who marched directly behind Ben when the little band withdrew from the place. In this manner the procession was maintained for two hours when the sun sank below the western hills.

Ben was thoroughly wearied from his strenuous exercises of the day. He had not had any food since early morning and he was thirsty as well as hungry. He was well aware, however, how useless as well as perilous it would be for him to complain, and doing his utmost to conceal his suffering he was silent while the little band continued on its way through the forest.

Why they had departed from the river he did not know. They plainly were Shawnees and must be in contact with the Indians who had slain Benoni and Waldo.

When night fell and Ben's captors made preparations for the night he was dismayed when he discovered that he was not to share in the meat which the Indians cooked. The odor intensified his hunger and he was almost on the point of asking for food, but fortunately restrained his desire.

When at last the Indians had completed their

meal they arranged a fire for the night and then bent down a low sapling to which they fastened a cowbell. Then the strap by which Ben's hands and feet were bound was tied to the little tree in such a manner that if he stirred, his motion would shake the sapling and the cowbell would ring an alarm.

It was a long and dreary night for the troubled boy. He did not know just where the Indians were encamped and was aware of the difficulty of retracing his way, even if the opportunity should be given him.

However, when morning came he was given a share of the meat and permitted to quench his thirst from the spring near which the camp had been made.

The flight was resumed as soon as the food had been eaten, and throughout the day, with the leather strap still adjusted to his neck and his hands bound by a leather thong, he continued through the forest. Occasionally he saw an open or cleared space among the trees, but for the most part the Indians proceeded through the woods, although there was no attempt to make haste.

When the second night fell the camp again was made near a spring from which Ben was permitted to drink his fill. Again the Indians selected a sapling which they bent over and to

which they fastened the strap by which Ben was bound as had been done the previous night.

The lad now was so thoroughly wearied that it was difficult even for him to sleep. Convinced that there was no necessity for a guard, inasmuch as their prisoner was securely bound, the four Indians and the white man stretched themselves upon the ground around their camp fire and soon were soundly sleeping.

Ben, however, had been unable to close his eyes. He was suffering intensely and his feeling of despair increased his misery. Forlorn, hungry, chilled, he did his utmost to fall asleep, but somehow his eyes refused to obey his commands. As if to make matters even worse rain began to fall and soon the young prisoner was trembling and shaking from the cold. He was unaware that the chilling rain itself was to prove its friendliness and provide a way by which his misery was to be modified.

CHAPTER XIV

THE WARNING

MEANWHILE it is necessary for us to return to the fortunes of those who were confined within the narrow limits of Farmers' Castle. Throughout the winter a steadily increasing number of people had fled to the place for refuge. Families as well as individuals from the neighborhood had found life too filled with peril to remain alone in the little huts they had built for homes. Indeed, plans had been carefully made for "swarming."

About two miles below the Castle itself a second large enclosure had been made and into the blockhouse within it more than forty people already had found a place of refuge.

Nor was the new enterprise confined merely to this new place of defense. There were more than two hundred people in Farmers' Castle. Some of the settlers had hesitated to cast in their fortunes with the mass. Another new blockhouse had been built capable of providing refuge for at least twenty.

In addition there were not a few of the settlers who had insisted upon remaining in their own homes, trusting either to the cold winter or to their own ability to defend themselves against the enemies.

Against the insistent advice of the leaders in Farmers' Castle certain of these men had formed a plan by which together they left their homes and looked after their possessions. In the large new blockhouse, to which reference has already been made, there was no order. Sentries had not been established nor had spies been organized to watch for the approach of the red men by night or day.

Early in January the river had frozen until a heavy solid mass of ice covered the waters. In the January thaw which followed, this ice had partly melted and then again had frozen until the surface was sufficiently strong to bear the weight of men and horses. About twenty rods back from the river three of the settlers, all men, had been living together in a hut. About the same distance below them was another hut similar in its construction and occupied by three other men. The sight of Indians had been common throughout the preceding summer. While the Indians had been hunting or loitering about from one home to another they had learned of the conditions under which

the settlers were living and had carefully made their plans for driving their enemies from the region.

The time had now come when the Indians determined to begin their campaign, although as a rule they did not enter upon the warpath until spring had appeared. Upon the new large blockhouse, to which reference has been made, where twenty people had found a place of refuge, came an attack one night, the story of which was frequently told and long remembered among the people of that day.

Soon after dusk, a band of prowling Indians approached the place. They had been not infrequent visitors throughout the winter and had been fed by the inmates, although certain of the leaders had strongly opposed such action. Suddenly the leader of the Indian band, who was a warrior of unusual size and strength, leaving the most of his followers behind him in the forest, stepped forward and opened the door of the blockhouse. Placing himself squarely within the entrance in such a way that it was impossible to close the door without driving him from the place he was occupying, he held his position while his companions at a signal rushed through the doorway.

The attack was so sudden and unexpected

that the whites in their confusion, which was due largely to their lack of order and preparation, fell to the floor. One man climbed the rude chimney, for the fire in the fireplace at that time was low, and successfully made his way to the roof of the building. His success, however, was only momentary, for the Indians speedily discovered his hiding place and the escaping pioneer soon fell to the ground, a victim of the shots of four or five of the Indians.

A small boy crawled for refuge underneath one of the beds that stood along the side walls of the room. The big Indian who had gained the entrance to the blockhouse raised his tomahawk and was about to slay the little fellow when the boy began to beg piteously that his life should be spared. At last his prayers were granted and the feet and hands of the lad were tightly bound while the Indians continued their depredation.

Silas Bullard, or Si as he was commonly known, together with one of his companions, managed somehow to flee from the place and escaped into the woods. They ran until they were nearly exhausted and, although they were not fully aware of the direction in which they were moving, they were fleeing toward Farmers' Castle.

It was nearly midnight when they at last ar-

rived at the defense. Almost exhausted by their exertions and nearly unbalanced by the terror that possessed them after the bloody attack they had seen upon their companions, they had to be helped within the stockade and for several minutes were unable to speak.

When at last they recovered sufficiently to describe the adventure through which they had passed, the excitement in Farmers' Castle became intense. The feeling was intensified by the fact that early in the morning of the same day numerous tracks of Indian moccasins had been found in the few remaining places where snow was still to be seen from the walls of the blockhouse. Doubtless the Indians had not made their attack because they found the sentinels awake. It is more than likely that they would not have attacked the other blockhouse if similar preparations had been made there.

The report of Silas Bullard was so startling, however, and aroused such terror among the inmates of the Castle, that it was decided that two boys immediately should be sent from the place to warn all the settlers who still remained in their own homes within two miles of the Castle, to come at once for shelter to the Castle.

To Ich's great delight, for the lad was among those who were more excited than alarmed by

the reports which had been brought of the various attacks, he was selected as one of the two to carry the word to the settlers. He was to move down the river while his companion was to go two miles up the stream on a similar task.

Ich was carrying his rifle and when he first departed from Farmers' Castle he was moving so rapidly that he soon discovered that he would not be able to maintain the swift pace at which he was running.

He soon arrived at the log house occupied by a young couple that had come from Massachusetts the preceding autumn and he gave to them the message he had received. He was surprised when both the young man and his wife sturdily refused to heed the warning. They declared they had been on friendly terms with the Indians throughout the summer and had been assured that they would not suffer from any attack the red men later might make. Ich in his haste did not remain to argue and as soon as he had delivered his message sped forward to carry the word to the settlers farther down the river.

At the second place where he stopped, his word created such an alarm that he was not obliged to describe what had taken place at the blockhouse. The people instantly gathered together a few of their belongings and fled for

refuge to Farmers' Castle. It was not until Ich came near to the blockhouse which had been attacked that he began to discover signs of the struggle which had been reported.

His first discovery was the body of a white man whom he had known well. The man was dead, probably having been shot while he was attempting to escape from the blockhouse. With a shudder Ich discovered also that the man's scalp had been removed. The lad's face was blanched when, after his investigation, he again arose and looked fearfully all about him. Not a sign of the presence of his foes did he discover. The silence that rested over the forest was unbroken. Not a living being was to be seen.

Ich was now thoroughly frightened. The story of the attack when first he had heard it at Farmers' Castle had been somewhat vague and he had not applied it to himself. Now, however, that he was approaching the place where the terrible scene had been enacted, his fears returned and in his excitement he was trembling as he proceeded. He had no thought, however, of fleeing from the region and, although he was shaking in his fear and watchful of the woods before him as he moved from tree to tree, he had no thought of abandoning the task which had been assigned him.

Within a few minutes Ich discovered other evidences of the recent attack by the Indians. There were other bodies of people who had fallen in their attempt to flee, but it was not until he had advanced a hundred yards or more that he became aware that only the charred ruins of the blockhouse remained.

Glancing fearfully all about him, Ich was still unable to discover any of his prowling foes and as he darted from tree to tree he soon drew near the smoking ruins of the blockhouse. It was plain to him that the charred remains of several people were to be seen in the ashes before him. There were no evidences of a struggle having occurred, for the building itself had been nearly consumed in the fire which had been set before the red men departed from the spot.

Ich was still further alarmed when he suddenly discovered the forms of men approaching through the adjacent woods. Seizing his rifle he turned to flee from the place but a shout served to recall him and as he glanced toward the approaching party his relief was marked when he discovered the hunter, Big Joe, leading the band.

The men were moving at a "dog trot" as the settlers defined the form of running which they had copied from the Indians. In a brief time

Big Joe approached the place where Ich was standing and in a low voice said, "What have you found, lad? Any one alive?"

"Not one," answered Ich. "I've found two or three dead and scalped but I haven't seen one that escaped."

"You wouldn't be likely to," answered the hunter, "because if they escaped they'd leave this region as fast as they could go."

The hunter was silent for a moment as he peered intently into the smoking ashes and then turning again to Ich he inquired, "Did you find any of the bodies in the fire?"

"Yes," replied Ich in a low voice. "I think I saw two or three."

The hunter was silent as he walked around the remains of the house, peering intently, as he moved, into the still smoking mass of ashes. As he returned to the place where Ich was standing he said, "There isn't much that we can do now. After you left Farmers' Castle we decided that we'd send a force down here because we weren't sure whether or not the redskins had left the place."

"I didn't see any signs of any," said Ich somewhat proudly. "I kept my eyes open all the way but I didn't see a living soul outside of the log houses where I stopped. When I came down here, I'll own up that I was pretty

badly scared. I hadn't been before that time, but when I got here it seemed to me I could see an Indian behind every tree."

"That's only natural," said Big Joe quietly. "This is as far as you are to go, isn't it?"

"Yes," answered Ich. "Tom Holmes was ordered to go two miles the other side of the Castle and I was to come down here. I warned everybody on the way but some of them wouldn't pay any attention."

"I guess there wasn't but one of those," responded Big Joe quietly. "That was Sam Halsey. He says he's going to stay right on the spot, but I'm telling you, lad, that he won't stay very long. The red men are going on the warpath."

"What makes you think so?" asked Ich quickly.

"Because of this," answered Big Joe as he held up a war club in his hand.

"Where did you get that?" demanded Ich excitedly.

"Just as we left the woods to come to this place."

"What do you think it means?"

"It means only one thing."

"What is that?" protested Ich.

"It is the redskins' way of making a declaration of war. This is the way they did two

years ago when they left their war clubs behind them after they had burned and shot down the settlers they had attacked."

"Do you think it means that we are going to have a war with them this summer?"

"I do," replied the hunter quietly almost as if Indian warfare was a matter in which he was not deeply interested.

"Where do you think it will start?"

"The good Lord only knows. I certainly don't."

"Do you think they will begin soon?" asked Ich. The lad was highly elated over his conversation with the hunter, who usually was silent and not inclined to talk to any one, much less to the boys. However, Ich was aware of the warm friendship of Big Joe and was convinced that the hunter really was deeply concerned over the prospect of an outbreak by the Shawnees and other tribes of the region.

"There isn't anything more we can do," said Big Joe at last, beckoning to his companions to approach from the wood. "We might as well go back to the Castle. Nobody knows what the women and children are doing back there. They were all mightily upset this morning when the report came of what had been done here at the blockhouse."

"I'm afraid they won't feel much better

when we get back there and you tell them what we've found."

"To be sure they won't," acknowledged the hunter. His companions, however, had meanwhile approached and even while they were consulting, Big Joe insisted that a guard should be established, one on the east and the other on the west of the little clearing which had been made around the blockhouse. An earnest consultation followed, but it soon ended when it was found that the men were mostly of one mind and that they all agreed with the suggestion of Big Joe that they should return to Farmers' Castle not only to protect the place but also to quiet the fears of many of the inmates.

The alarm which an Indian uprising created along the border is well nigh beyond the comprehension of people to-day. The very loneliness of the pioneers added to their alarm. Then, too, the Indian method of warfare which, instead of planning for battles, largely depended upon picking off isolated settlers while they were at work in the fields or alone in their homes added to the terror of all. The discovery by the hunter of the huge war club, which the Indians had left behind them, made still more certain the fact that a general Indian uprising was about to take place. In that event,

the sole hope of safety, at the least for a time, for the sturdy settlers, was in uniting.

Big Joe was sceptical of any concerted attack on Farmers' Castle by the Indians because of the location of the little fortress and also because its approaches were so thoroughly guarded. He was aware, however, that an attack was not an impossibility because the Indians in recent years apparently had been changing their methods and it was not an unusual sight to see them marching in orderly formation. Naturally their methods were different from those of the whites but the effectiveness of the Indians' plan was not to be lightly taken.

Indeed, Big Joe was not the only man on the border who believed in the ability of the leaders of the Indians, and that among them Little Turtle was an outstanding man of genius. This conviction was shared by many others along the border.

"We'll go back now," said the hunter after a brief time. "We'd better go back just as we came. If Sam Holmes hasn't thought better by this time, I think we'd better pick him up body and breeches and take him along with us. If he doesn't know enough to take care of himself, then we ought to have mercy on his little wife. She's one of the sweetest, bravest little

women that ever helped to take up land from the Ohio Company. She's too good a woman to let her stay with her husband and be scalped by the Shawnees."

The returning band had not discovered any of their foes when at last they arrived at the little log house of Sam Holmes. No one was discovered within it and apparently Sam had decided that for once at least it was better for him to heed the warnings of his friends than to remain alone where he was certain to be attacked.

"I'm thinking," said Big Joe, as the party resumed its march, "that Sam's wife may have got him to come to reason. If she did, it's the first time, I'm sure, that Sam ever did such a thing in his whole life. He's just as obstinate as a mule and he won't listen to reason."

"How do you know?" inquired Ich.

"Because I've told him what to do lots of times and he doesn't pay any more attention than he would to a chickadee."

"Maybe," suggested Ich, "he wasn't so dead sure that you knew so much more than he did."

"I was just telling him for his own good," said Big Joe slowly.

"That was mighty kind of you," laughed Ich, who, now that he was once more in the company of his friends, had recovered largely

from the alarm which had recently seized him.

Several times after the return march had been resumed, Ich glanced slyly at the hunter, but as Big Joe apparently was serene in his self-confidence, the boy did not refer to his recent words. Big Joe was all right. He was true-hearted and absolutely reliable. But he was so self-confident and so thoroughly convinced that his own knowledge was superior to that of any of his companions that there were times when his natural egotism was a source of fun for the people that knew him well.

The entire band proceeded silently on its way, every man alert and watchful. There was nothing seen, however, to alarm them until they once more stood within the stockade of Farmers' Castle. There, however, their excitement increased when they were greeted by the sight before them.

CHAPTER XV

THE BROTHERS DEPART

WHEN Ich passed through the gateway he saw in the square a band of thirty or more men who apparently were preparing to depart hastily from the Castle. As the lad became aware of the intense excitement that seemed to pervade the assembly he ran eagerly to a place where he saw his friend Tom Holmes, who had been sent northward on an errand similar to the one on which Ich had been sent to the south.

"What is it? What is it, Tom?" asked Ich excitedly.

"Why, they've got word that—" Tom stopped abruptly as the heavy roll of the drums broke in upon the silence. Four of the drummers were standing together and beating the long roll.

Just what was implied was not apparent to Ich who turned again in his eagerness to Tom and asked, "What is that for? What's gone wrong?"

"I told you," replied Tom, turning his eyes away from the drummer.

"No, you didn't. You started to but you didn't finish what you had to say."

"Well, they've got word," said Tom, "that the Indians are ready for a march on Farmers' Castle. We've had a watch here all night and word has come that down at the big blockhouse—"

"How did you get word from the big blockhouse?" interrupted Ich. "I've just come from there myself."

"Why, Timothy Gardner got in here about half an hour ago and he reported that all the people in the blockhouse were killed. He was as white as a sheet."

"Well, they weren't all killed," said Ich, "but some of them were. I hope I may never see another sight like that."

The lad shuddered as he spoke, for the recollections of the ghastly scenes through which he had passed only a few hours before were still vivid.

"You ask Big Joe about it," he continued. "I never saw the hunter so excited as he was down there. I warned everybody along the river to come here for it wasn't safe for them to stay where they were."

"Did they come?"

"I don't know," answered Ich. "I did my part when I carried the message to them. I know one thing, though."

"What's that?" demanded Tom.

"Big Joe says the Indians have made a declaration of war. You know how they did that, don't you?"

"No," answered Tom. "I didn't know that the redskins ever did a thing like that. I thought they hit you with their tomahawks before they told you why they were going to do it."

"Sometimes they do," admitted Ich, "but Big Joe brought into the blockhouse a big war club he had found, out near the edge of the clearing. He said that was the way the Indians took to show that, after this time, they were going to fight."

"I don't know what they call what they were doing before this, then," said Tom.

"Did you get word to all your people?" asked Ich, as a brief silence came over the assembly.

"Every one," said Tom.

"Did they all come down to the Castle?"

"I don't know. I'm like you. I did my part when I took the message the Captain gave me. If they don't do what he told them to, the fault isn't mine."

The boys became silent when once more the long heavy roll of the drums was heard and from the movements of the band it became apparent that the men were about to depart from the Castle.

Eager as Ich was to share in all the exciting events, he was too weary to ask permission to join the men who were about to depart. He watched the sturdy pioneers as at the command of their leader they formed and marched toward the gate. In a brief time they had departed from the Castle and, although many of the inmates watched them from the upper windows, they soon were lost to sight.

Although he was wearied by his recent exertions, Ich began to search for his brother. He was more alarmed when he was unable to find any one who had recently seen Ben within the stockade. Ich's fears increased still more when he frantically began to search throughout the place. An hour later, however, he was convinced that his brother was missing. What had become of him was now a question that Ich asked with trembling lips. He was devotedly attached to Ben, in spite of his apparent unwillingness to be directed by his older brother. He had seen Ben when he had departed with the half dozen men from the Castle and now he was trying to find one of the little band

that might be able to tell him of the experiences they had met with in their expedition.

At last Ich chanced upon Robert Stone, one of the men who had gone in the morning, and running quickly to him he asked eagerly, "Where is Ben?"

"I can't tell you," replied Stone.

"Wasn't he with you yesterday morning when you left the Castle?"

"Yes."

"Well, where is he now?"

"I don't know," replied Stone quietly. Then as he saw the distress of the lad before him he said in a tone of voice which he intended to be sympathetic, "Probably he'll show up in a little while. Our party got all broke up."

"What do you mean?" demanded Ich quickly. "Who broke it?"

"Well, a couple wanted to land to get some turkeys that they heard gobbling."

As Stone became silent, Ich said, "Did they get them?"

"There weren't any gobblers there except redskins," explained Stone. "We are perfectly sure they got both of the men who were fooled by their gobbles. We tried to find some trace of them afterward but we couldn't find a thing and finally had to come away without them. The trapper was determined to leave

us and go the round of his traps but none of us thought he ought to go alone, so Ben went with him."

"And they haven't come back yet?" asked Ich in a low voice.

"Not yet," said Stone quietly. "That doesn't mean that they won't come, though they may have their troubles in getting here. It is the same all the way from Fort Pitt to Mackinaw. The seven tribes are just ready to start on the warpath and in some places they aren't even waiting to start. They're picking off the settlers before they begin their march. It was a fool thing to do to go out and look for Waldo or anybody else. But our men would go and Ben was determined to go with them. There isn't anything you can do except to wait."

"I guess you're right," answered Ich as he turned slowly from the place.

Both of his brothers were now out of the Castle and, while he was not alarmed for his older brother, his fears for Ben became increasingly strong. Several times it almost seemed to him that he could hear the shrill whistle of the lad and once he turned squarely around when it seemed as if some one was calling his name from the forest beyond. These incidents, however, served to increase the

alarm in Ich's heart and when night fell and darkness began to creep over the region and his brother still was missing, poor Ich was in a state of mind that cannot be described.

Again and again he came back to see Stone and learn whether or not he had heard of the return of any of the men who were in his party when they had gone forth in the morning of the preceding day to search for the body of their friend whom they believed to have been slain by the red men. The hours, however, brought no relief to Ich and when at last in the darkness he took his blanket and sought his place on the floor of the room, which in the daylight served as a schoolroom, it was long before he was able to close his eyes. And even then there were visions of his brother pursued by the Indians, or falling under the sudden blow of his treacherous foes.

At last, however, Ich was asleep. It was not yet daylight when he was awakened by the touch of a hand upon his shoulder. Trained to the necessity of constant vigilance, Ich looked up in silence and in the dim light was able to discern the face and form of his older brother. "That you, Phin?" whispered Ich.

"Yes," came the low reply. "Get up and come with me and don't make any noise."

Although he was eager to question his

brother, Ich was silent as he obediently followed the directions which he had received. There were a dozen or more forms of men to be seen sleeping on the floor of the schoolroom and once it was necessary to step directly over one, but Ich was trained now by the long period of watchfulness the inmates of the Castle had been compelled to observe, and moved forward almost as silently as a shadow.

When they were outside the building, Phin stopped and turning to his brother said, "We've had word about Ben."

"What is it, Phin?" asked Ich in a low tone of voice.

"I'm afraid it's bad news."

"But what is it?" again asked Ich quietly.

"When he went off with the trapper," explained Phin, "it seems that they got separated and a couple of Indians started after him in a canoe. Ben was in a canoe too, but of course he was no match for two redskins. They chased him and I'm afraid they got him."

"Don't you know? Don't you know whether he was taken or not?" demanded Ich sharply.

"No. Abner has just come into the Castle and he came straight to me with the story that two redskins chased Ben down the river and afterward when Abner and Hiram started, they found the canoe in which Ben had gone but it

was all smashed to bits. It had drifted up on the shore."

Ich was silent for a minute before he said, "Of course, they are dead sure it was the canoe Ben had?"

"They say they are," answered Phin. "But they can't find hide nor hair of the redskins, any more than they can of Ben."

"So they made up their minds that the Indians must have taken Ben away with them. Is that it?" asked Ich.

"That's what they say, but I'm not so dead sure that they are right."

"Neither am I," said Ich quickly. "I don't believe Ben would wait for them to take him away with them. They may have shot him, but if they took him in his canoe, why didn't they keep that as well as Ben? Canoes this time of the year are not so plentiful along the river that either our men or the redskins want to smash one up if it's in good condition."

"This one was all right," said Phin.

"Then I don't believe they've got Ben. There's something strange and perhaps something wrong, but I don't believe that two redskins took Ben if he was really trying to get away. Of course, they could paddle a good deal faster than he could, but Ben knows the way all along the shores on either side of the

river and I'm telling you that he could find a place where not even the redskins could get him."

"I hope you're right," said Phin quickly.

"Well, I hope so, too," acknowledged Ich. "But what I'm saying to you is gospel truth. Ben wouldn't be likely to wait for two men to come up with him. He knew they would get him if he kept on paddling because they were two to one. It may be that he has crawled into some tree or hid himself on some bank. You can trust your brother Ben. Don't you think so?" Ich added, as Phin did not reply.

"I want to believe it so much that I may not be really a good judge. What I wanted to say to you was this: Do you want to go with me and see if we can find out anything about Ben?"

"I do," replied Ich, as he instantly turned and followed his brother who led the way toward the water gate. There was no time nor opportunity for any additional explanation until they arrived at the gate where Corporal O'Brien evidently was expectant.

"Is it all right?" demanded the young Irishman.

"All right," answered Phin. "We're going to go down the river in our canoe and see if we can find any trace of Ben. Ich feels just

as I do that when Ben knew that he was being chased by two full-grown redskins he wouldn't be likely to stick to his canoe. He would know the Indians would get him if he did. But he knows lots of places in which he could hide along on both sides of the river. Ich thinks, and I agree with him, that Ben probably made for one of these and may still be there. We want to find out anyway."

"Indade," said O'Brien, "an' it may be true and I hope it is. But did it iver occur to yez that the pesky redskins may know some of those hidin' places you're just spakin' about?"

"Yes," answered Phin. "We have thought of all that, but the chances are that, after they lost sight of Ben, they probably didn't try to follow him up, especially if he knew all these places and they didn't know which one he had taken. They might not be able to trail him for Ben is a good one on hiding his tracks. At any rate, we think we'd better slip out and see if we can find him."

"Don't forget," said O'Brien, in a tone which he meant for a whisper, but which might have been heard on the opposite side of the Castle, "that more'n thirty of our men left the Castle a spell ago and they're on the lookout for everything and everybody that may be in trouble."

"I haven't forgotten it," said Phin, "but I think they're not going in our direction. We're going to take a canoe and paddle downstream. We know about where Ben took the canoe for Robert Stone has come back and he told us all about it. We think we ought to try it anyway."

"Well, good luck to yez," said O'Brien quietly, as he withdrew the bar and permitted the two brothers to depart from the Castle.

Each of the boys was armed with a rifle and was carrying a paddle for use in the canoe in which they were planning to depart. In silence they moved toward the shore, glancing keenly all about them as they proceeded, for the hour was approaching when, if the Indians should plan an attack, it would be likely to be made. They did not discover any signs of danger when at last they gained the shore and drew forth a light canoe from the place in which it had been hidden. Both boys were experts in the use of the paddle and almost by instinct, certainly without any directions, each took his place, Phineas in the bow, and together they began to paddle out into the stream.

The stillness of the night was almost oppressive. Not a sound broke in upon the silence. The light was dim, for there was no moon and the blackness of the shores seemed to be inten-

sified by the dim reflections in the water. Not a word was spoken by either and their bodies moved as if they were directed by the same hidden power. On the bottom of the canoe their two rifles were resting in a position which would enable each boy to seize his own weapon instantly. So well did Ich understand his brother, that even when Phin stopped occasionally to listen or to peer intently ahead of him, Ich followed the same course, although not a word was spoken.

For an hour the labors of the boys continued without interruption and then Phin abruptly changed the direction in which they were moving and the light little craft was sent swiftly toward the shore.

CHAPTER XVI

LITTLE EAGLE

IT is time for us to return to the fortunes of Ben whom we left a prisoner of the Shawnees. A sensation of despair had swept over him when he found himself tied to the bent sapling, to which a cowbell had been attached.

In the dim light as he looked about the camp, for the fire was still burning, he saw that his captors had not established a guard. Evidently they were confident that they were not likely to be attacked and equally assured that their young prisoner would not be able to escape. Even when Ben moved slightly the cowbell gave forth its warning sound. He glanced fearfully at the sleeping Indians but not one of them moved and the lad was more thoroughly convinced than before that they were certain that he would not be able to escape. A guard was not necessary.

That his hands were tied tightly Ben well knew, for his suffering was extreme. The leather thongs cut into his flesh and the damp,

cold air increased his misery. Again he moved slightly and once more the bent saplings caused the cowbell to send forth its low warning. The Indians, however, still did not move and apparently were not alarmed by the sound.

In his desperation Ben stretched his arms, trying to obtain a little relief from his cramped position. Once more there was a faint tinkle of the bell and, although the young prisoner was alarmed, he was soon aware that the sound had failed to arouse his captors. Not one of the Indians moved from his position. All were asleep in a semicircle about the fire, which still continued to burn.

An hour or more passed and the misery of the suffering lad was not relieved. Then, however, rain began to fall. At first only a few drops fell upon Ben's upturned face but soon the threatened downpour came. Cold and miserable, hungry and yet not entirely in despair, Ben resolutely endeavored to bear his hardships without complaining.

His arms once more were aching because he had been unable to change his position. As he tried to pull them quietly he was aware that the thong by which his wrists were bound was giving a little. Startled by his discovery the desperate lad tried again and speedily was convinced that the leather, softened by the fall-

ing rain, had become slightly more elastic than at the time when he had first been made a prisoner.

A sudden ray of hope came with the conviction and resolutely he continued to pull upon the straps, hoping to free his right hand. It had been a matter of frequent comment among Ben's boyish comrades that he was different from his fellows in that his wrists were slightly larger than his hands. Now, however, this fact brought a slight ray of hope, for when the Indians had bound him they had tied the straps securely about his wrists.

Alternately pulling and resting, and all the time striving to be silent in his activity, Ben worked to free himself from his position. He was aware that his hands and wrists were bleeding, for the straps had cut into his skin and flesh. But there was no question now concerning the fact of his hand becoming freer. The leather had slipped down over his wrist and although his hand still was bound, every effort of the desperate lad pulled the hand a little farther through the strap.

He was desperately trying to prevent the bell from sounding its warning, at the same time he was working to free himself. Twice the little bell sounded, but the alarm evidently did not disturb his sleeping captors. Once one

of the warriors arose from the ground and approaching Ben convinced himself that the prisoner was still safely held.

Ben's heart was beating rapidly, for at that time the strap was around his knuckles instead of around his wrists and he was convinced that in a brief time his right hand would be free. He waited until long after the Indian had resumed his sleeping position before he renewed his efforts.

In a brief time, however, his hand was free. It was still necessary for him to hold down the bent sapling in order to prevent the ringing of the bell. He approached the little tree, glancing frequently behind him at the campfire and his enemies, and then, by thrusting his arm over the small trunk, he was able soon to free his left hand also from the strap by which it was bound. With the utmost care he slowly let the sapling regain its upright position and fortunately he did not sound the cowbell.

He was free from his bindings but still was within the camp. For several minutes he stood gazing anxiously at the warriors and then as he perceived that their guns had been stacked about the base of a huge maple, he suddenly decided to attempt to secure one of the weapons for his own use.

Stealthily he withdrew and, by creeping

slowly and cautiously, he approached the tree. It was long before he dared thrust forth his hand and seize one of the rifles. The weapon would be useless unless he had also powder and balls. In the flickering light he saw that the powder horns and bullet pouches all had been deposited together near by and he abruptly turned and crept toward the spot. Fortunately he was able to obtain a horn, which he was convinced was filled with powder, and also a well-filled pouch of bullets.

Then having gained that for which he had been striving he slowly and with extreme care turned toward the forest. Frequently he glanced behind him at the spot he was leaving and occasionally he walked backward in order to enable him to see more clearly what was taking place in the camp.

When he had withdrawn a hundred feet, in his fear he again stopped and listened intently, but no sound broke in upon the steady beating of the rain. His excitement was keen and his fears were great. Nevertheless having succeeded thus far he was determined to carry out his attempt to flee from the spot.

Still he slowly withdrew until at last he found himself well within the adjacent forest. Then it was that he turned and ran at his utmost speed. He was unaware of the direction

in which he was moving and unfamiliar with the woods through which he was passing. His supreme purpose now was to get away as rapidly and as far as possible from the camp fire of his captors. He had no conception of the passing of time. He was aware, however, that his footprints on the muddy ground or in the dirty snow that still remained would be like the pages of an open book to his enemies when they should follow in pursuit.

Occasionally the lad stopped when he was almost convinced that he heard the sound of pursuers moving among the trees. In every case, however, his fears had proved to be groundless. As yet he was not followed. His sole hope depended upon his swiftness and ability to place the greatest possible distance between him and the red men. If he should be overtaken, Ben was convinced that he knew what fate would befall him. At such moments he renewed his flight, moving swiftly but still retaining in his hand the rifle which he had taken.

The powder flask and the bullet pouch were slung over his shoulders and as they occasionally caught in the bushes brought him to an abrupt halt. Every time he speedily freed himself and at once resumed his flight.

When at last the dawn appeared he was confident that he had placed several miles between

him and the camp from which he had fled. He still plunged forward, although he had no conception of the direction in which he ought to move. He was not entirely without experience in woodcraft, but the confusion of the last few hours had deprived him of his sense of direction.

As soon as the sun appeared he assured himself that he would be able to make his way in the direction in which he must go in order to rejoin his friends. The thought of his friends reminded him at once of Ich and Phin. How troubled his brothers would be by his mysterious absence! Doubtless they would attribute his disappearance to an attack by the Indians. In view of what recently had befallen several of the men who had been inmates of Farmers' Castle, Ben was convinced that he fully appreciated the anxiety of his brothers.

At such moments he increased his speed, frequently glancing fearfully behind him as he sped on through the forest. Still there had not been any signs of pursuit. It was strange, almost mysterious, Ben assured himself, and yet the fact was not to be denied.

The woods were becoming light now and he was able to see a considerable distance before him. By his determination he had already accomplished more than he had dared to expect

and the very success which had attended his efforts now brought fresh courage to his boyish heart.

He ran swiftly ahead and then a few moments later stopped abruptly when he found himself standing on the border of what evidently was a little clearing. An acre or more was comparatively stripped of trees and a little house of logs that stood on the opposite side of the clearing evidently was occupied because smoke was slowly rising from the chimney.

In order to mystify his pursuers if they followed his trail, as Ben confidently believed they would do, he reversed his position now in his sudden decision to approach the log house. In this manner also he was able to scan the borders of the adjacent forest and be on the lookout for the appearance of the red men.

In a brief time he had drawn near the walls of the building and, raising himself to his feet, peered through the open window. Within the room he saw a white man and a young Indian boy, apparently of his own age. The sight was both appealing and alarming. The presence of the Indian implied that a white man would not be friendly and yet to go on was almost impossible. He was tired and hungry and thoroughly chilled, because his clothing was wet and heavy.

As he glanced back into the forest once more, searching for signs of his enemies, he suddenly decided that it would be safer for him to trust the men before him than to try in any way to appeal to the red men who were doubtless upon his trail.

"Hello!" he called, in a low voice. Plainly his words were not heard, for neither the white man nor the Indian boy gave any heed. They were busy in their preparations for breakfast and the odor of the broiling bacon increased Ben's eagerness.

Again he called, "Hello! Hello!" in tones somewhat louder. This time his words produced an effect which for a moment almost caused Ben to flee into the adjacent forest and trust his safety to his own efforts rather than to his appeal for help. The white man uttered a low exclamation and literally leaped to the side of the cabin for the rifle which was standing there. The Indian boy too was startled by the call and rushed to the place where his own weapons were standing.

"Who ees it?" called the white man, as, with rifle at his shoulder, he gazed intently at the open window through which the sound had been heard.

"It is me," replied Ben quietly, if not grammatically.

"Who ees 'me'?"

"My name is Ben. Will you let me in?"

"Where you come from?"

"The Indians got me," answered Ben. "I have just managed to get away from their camp. They may be after me at this very time."

"What Indians? Which is ze tribe?"

"The Shawnees captured me," answered Ben.

"You shall come wiz me. You shall come queeck," chattered the Frenchman in his excitement, as he swiftly drew the bolt of the sole door in the little building. Stepping quickly outside, the man, who now clearly revealed the fact that he was a Frenchman as well as a white man, turned to the place where Ben was waiting. Impulsively the Frenchman darted forward and seizing Ben by his aching wrist drew him swiftly within the cabin.

"You shall see," exclaimed the Frenchman. "We shall be some good friend. You shall be ze good friend to Leetle Eagle, too," added the man quickly, as he turned and indicated the Indian boy.

Ben, feeling utterly helpless and still somewhat fearful of the meaning of his reception by his impulsive host, obeyed the summons and entered the room. The Frenchman quickly

closed and barred the door behind him and then once more resumed his task before the fire that was blazing upon the hearth.

"You shall soon see," he exclaimed, chattering like a schoolboy as he continued in his task of preparing breakfast. "You shall see ze bacon. It ees ver' scarce. I find a leetle piece in what you call Gal—Gallipolees."

"Did you come from there?" inquired Ben hastily.

"Yeez, yeez. Oui. You have some friends there?"

"I know some people there," said Ben quickly. "They came down to Farmers' Castle and played the fiddle for us two or three times this winter when we had dances."

"Yeez, yeez. I know Henri. He plays ze fiddle. I know Henri ver', ver' well. So you see we have ze same friends. You shall see, too," continued the Frenchman, as he placed the still sizzling bacon upon the wooden plate on the rude little table in the center of the room.

Ben in spite of his fear was more deeply interested at the moment in the occupation of his host than in his words. It had been long since he had tasted food and the odor of the bacon certainly was most tempting. In addition to the bacon the Frenchman had cooked cornmeal in a way new and strange to Ben, but the man-

ner of preparation had not detracted anything from the tempting sight it presented.

"We shall help you," continued the Frenchman. "You shall soon see. We shall send you to your friend."

"The Shawnees may not let you," suggested Ben, glancing through the open window in spite of his calm words.

"Ze redskins shall not do you some harm. You wait. You shall see."

Ben glanced at the young Indian, but the boy's stolid face did not betray any interest in the conversation. A moment later, however, Little Eagle suddenly arose and, advancing silently to the little window, for a moment peered intently at the surrounding forest; then he turned to the Frenchman and spoke two or three words in such a low tone of voice that Ben was unable to hear what he said. The excitement of the Frenchman, however, instantly increased. Turning to Ben he exclaimed, "You shall go up! You shall go up! I shall help you."

At once approaching the lad he indicated that he was to climb up into the loft by means of a rude ladder which the Frenchman instantly placed in position. Ben did not hesitate. He was aware now of the warning the young Indian had given of the approach of the

warriors. The Frenchman apparently was friendly and, even if he were not so disposed, Ben was convinced that his safety was as promising in the cabin as it would be if he attempted to flee from the place.

He was now tired from his long-continued efforts and his hunger was so keen that it seemed almost impossible for him to continue his flight. Hesitating but a moment he hastily followed the directions of his host and ascended into the loft. He peered below him, watching the Frenchman as he quickly removed the ladder from its position and took it outside the cabin.

As soon as the man reëntered he spoke to Ben bidding him lower the trapdoor to cover the entrance. Ben was only too willing to follow the directions, and yet there was space in the casing of the trapdoor sufficient to enable him to see what was occurring in the room below him. He was also able to hear much that was said by the excited Frenchman and the Indian boy.

The opportunity even for such conversation, however, was slight, for in a brief time Ben heard a heavy blow upon the outside door which he was convinced was made by the leader of his recent captors striking the strong framework with his tomahawk.

CHAPTER XVII

THE PLIGHT OF BEN

THE alarm of Ben increased when the sound of the pounding upon the heavy door became more imperative. There were also loud calls for the door to be opened. The frightened lad had no difficulty in recognizing the voices of Indians and he was fully convinced that his pursuers had traced him directly to the cabin in which he had been received. His fears naturally increased and he was trembling in his excitement.

In a brief time, however, he heard the Frenchman call, "Ze door will be opened. Ze door will be opened."

There was still space between the trapdoor and the ceiling of the room to enable Ben to peer down into the room below him. He was lying prone upon the rough floor, his eyes peering through the small open space and he was able to see clearly the door as well as the Frenchman and Little Eagle. He watched the Frenchman when the latter finally lifted

the heavy bar from the door and flung it open. Instantly five Shawnees rushed into the room and Ben's worst fears were confirmed.

He recognized two of them as warriors who had assisted in making him a prisoner and he had no question in his mind that the others were also red men who had been in the camp in which he had been held a prisoner. The thought of his capture for a moment recalled the pain in his wrists, but the excitement of watching what was occurring below him was so keen that even the pain was quickly forgotten and he waited for events to declare themselves.

"What ees it you want?" demanded the Frenchman.

To Ben's surprise the anger of the Indians apparently disappeared at once. It was evident that they were acquainted with the little Frenchman and also that they had confidence in his word. There was a low conversation between the leader of the red men and the Frenchman, of which Ben could hear but little. That it concerned himself, however, was evident, and the eagerness of his recent captors was apparent in their gestures as they pointed in various directions evidently indicating the flight of their prisoner. They had had no difficulty in following the trail of the lad, owing

to the haste with which he had fled and the condition of the ground and what little was left of the winter's snow. In fact Ben was convinced that they had followed him soon after his departure and evidently had made as good speed as he himself had been able to make in his terror.

The conversation continued for several minutes, but Ben was able to hear only a few of the words that were spoken. The friendliness of the Indians still was manifest and after a little while Ben's hopes increased that the Frenchman would not betray him. Indeed his confidence in the little man had been strengthened by the evident spirit of helpfulness he had manifested from the moment that Ben had entered the log cabin. Why he should have assisted him to a hiding place in the loft was not plain if he had intended to turn him over to his captors.

However, Ben was in no mood to think sanely and his fears were still so keen that every word and movement of the men who almost filled the little room below him took on a tragic interest.

In a brief time it was manifest that the Frenchman had convinced his visitors that the boy for whom they were searching must be looked for elsewhere. The Indians peered keenly into every part of the room and once,

when they looked at the trapdoor, Ben's heart gave a sudden throb in his fear lest they should carry their investigations further. There was no escape for him from the room in which he was hidden and only a slight investigation would reveal his presence to his enemies. That they would deal savagely with him if they once again had him in their power he had no doubt. He was familiar with the customs of the various tribes and was well aware that a prisoner who had escaped and had been retaken seldom received any mercy.

In a brief time the Indians departed, not, however, before they had consumed the breakfast which the Frenchman had prepared. Evidently no protest had been made against their action and as soon as they had departed the Frenchman and the Indian boy resumed their task of broiling the bacon over the open fire. Ben expected that they would recall him as soon as their visitors had gone. As the moments passed and apparently no thought was given to him, he ventured to call to the men below. Instantly the Frenchman looked up to the trapdoor and motioning with both his hands for Ben to withdraw from the place, said, "It ees too soon. It ees too soon."

"Can't I come down now?" called Ben in a low voice.

"No! No!" said the Frenchman excitedly. "It ees too soon. It ees too much soon."

It was evident to Ben now that his friend, for as such he now looked upon his host, was fearful that their recent visitors might return to the cabin and if they should come unexpectedly and find him with the other two, there would be no question as to what would follow.

Striving to be content Ben stretched himself on the floor and eagerly watched the occupation of the two below him who were again preparing breakfast. It had been long since he had tasted food and the odor which now arose from the broiling bacon intensified his hunger. For a moment it almost seemed to him that he would be willing to brave the possibility of recapture if only he could eat some of the tempting food which was being prepared by his friends.

However, he did not move from his position and, although his troubles increased when he watched the Indian lad as he devoured the tempting bacon, he did not speak until after more than a half hour had elapsed and the Frenchman called to him in a low voice. He now replaced the ladder and Ben quickly lifted the trapdoor and descended to the room below.

"I have put Leetle Eagle as ze guard. He will let us know if ze Shawnees come. You

shall then go up ze ladder and you shall pull ze ladder up after you."

"Suppose they don't come?" inquired Ben, who was peering about him for food.

"If zey do not come, I help you some more," said the Frenchman with a laugh.

"I'm hungry now," said Ben simply.

"Ze hungry shall be fed," replied the Frenchman, instantly busying himself again in the task of preparing food for his visitor.

To Ben the time seemed to drag, though his host was moving quickly in his efforts to provide for the hungry lad. Ben frequently stepped to the open window and peered out into the adjacent forest, striving to discover whether or not his enemies were within sight. When he was summoned to his repast, even thoughts of his recent captors were abolished from his mind for a time and he gave himself with all zest to the food which the Frenchman now placed upon the rude wooden table which stood at one side of the room.

Apparently the delight of the Frenchman was almost as keen in the vigor with which Ben attacked his breakfast as was that of the hungry boy himself. Frequently the man laughed aloud and several times he approached Ben and patted him softly on the shoulder as if he were approving his ability to dispose

of the quantity of food which was before him.

After he had satisfied his hunger he arose and turning to his host he said, "You have been my good friend. I thank you. I don't know what I can do to pay you but some time the turn will be mine and I shall be glad to do you a favor."

"Zat ees so," responded the delighted Frenchman. "Some day you shall do for me. Now I shall have you go back into ze loft and pull up ze ladder."

"But I want to go on," protested Ben quickly. "I can't stay here. I want to get back to Farmers' Castle."

"But you shall not go now," said the little Frenchman glibly. "We shall wait. You shall see. Ze Shawnees may be all around ze cabin. Zey may be hiding behind ze tree. You shall not go. When it ees later in ze day, ze Leetle Eagle shall go wiz you."

"Will he go with me?" demanded Ben quickly, as he glanced at the young Indian.

"*Oui! Oui!* Leetle Eagle shall go wiz you."

Ben said no more and the ladder was at once brought in and by it he ascended to the loft. The trapdoor once more was dropped after he had pulled the ladder into the loft with him. It was a tedious day, for the boy who was more

closely confined now than he had been in captivity. There were moments when he almost decided that he could no longer endure the solitude and silence. In every case, however, his better nature asserted itself and he did his utmost to be patient.

At times he slept for he was more weary than he knew. Such naps, however, were brief and whenever he awoke Ben's first impulse was to peer through the opening by the trapdoor in order to discover whether or not his foes had returned.

Then the day at last departed and when the shadows of evening fell, the Frenchman summoned Ben from his hiding place. He was so stiff and sore from his recent experiences that he nearly fell when he attempted to descend the ladder. However, the sight of food on the table below him served as a sufficient incentive and Ben soon was doing justice to the venison which the kind-hearted Frenchman had prepared for him.

When he arose from the bench on which he had been sitting the dusk had deepened and the night was at hand. Preparations were at once made for his departure. The rifle which he had taken from the Indian had been oiled and looked after by his host.

"Is it safe for me to go with Little Eagle?"

whispered Ben to the Frenchman when the preparation was complete.

"*Oui,* it ees safe. Leetle Eagle know ze way and he knows how to fool ze Indians."

Ben waited for no more and at once set forth with Little Eagle. His companion was silent as he led the way into the adjacent forest and Ben followed obediently. His eyes soon became accustomed to the dim light but after a brief time he found it difficult to maintain the trot at which Little Eagle was moving. His recent experiences had been more severe than he had realized at the time. However, he did not complain and resolutely followed his guide until at last the young Indian halted beside a spring. There each of the boys drank his fill and after a brief rest Little Eagle said, "Time to go."

"How much farther is it?" inquired Ben.

"White boy tired?"

"Yes," answered Ben promptly. "I have had a hard time since the Shawnees took me prisoner."

"Like squaw."

"No, I am not like a squaw!" retorted Ben sharply. "My hands are torn and my legs are sore but I'll keep up with you if you don't go any faster than you did before."

Little Eagle grunted but not wholly in dis-

approval. Ben was aware that his companion probably had been trying to draw from the white boy an acknowledgment of his fatigue. Nothing pleased the Indians more than to show their superiority over the physical prowess of the white invaders. If Little Eagle felt any sympathy for the troubled lad he did not display his feelings. His pace, however, was slower, although Ben was aware that he did not explain to him how much longer their journey must continue before they were due to arrive at the house of the Frenchman to whom his recent host was sending him. Throughout the night the journey continued and it was nearly dawn when at last Little Eagle halted on what was plainly the border of a small clearing.

It was plain, too, that the trees had been recently felled, for the stumps were fresh and the house on the border was not yet completed. Confidently Little Eagle led the way toward the log cabin, but when the boys arrived they discovered that it was unoccupied. This, however, did not deter Little Eagle who at once entered and motioned for his companion to follow.

Ben, now thoroughly wearied by his efforts in the darkness, was glad when he became aware that their journey was broken even if

it had not come to its end. Here they rested for two hours at which time the beams of the rising sun were appearing in the east.

"How much farther do we go?" inquired Ben as he prepared to follow his guide.

Little Eagle did not reply to the question and as he led the way once more into the forest, Ben followed, although his muscles were protesting against the pain which his activities caused them to suffer.

They had not advanced far, however, before Little Eagle stopped abruptly and placing his finger upon his lips in token of silence, motioned for Ben to stop where he was while the Indian boy crept forward on his hands and knees. Ben was aware that his keen-eyed companion had discovered something that had alarmed him. He waited impatiently for Little Eagle to return and in a brief time the young Indian came back and approaching closely to Ben whispered, "Plenty Wyandottes. Heap Shawnees."

"Where?" whispered Ben.

Little Eagle pointed into the forest as Ben inquired quickly, "How far away?"

"Close by," whispered Little Eagle. "One minute, two minute, three minute walk, and we get away without their finding us."

Little Eagle's eyes flashed in the dim morn-

ing light and he said no more. He turned quickly and, although he had not been bidden to do so, Ben understood that he was to follow. The young Indian retraced his way several hundred feet, then, circling to his left, advanced slowly and cautiously until at last he was convinced that they had passed the camp upon which he had stumbled.

"How many Indians were there?" inquired Ben, when at last they halted.

Little Eagle shook his head and held up the fingers of his right hand five times to indicate the numbers he had discovered in the camp. Ben said no more as he turned and followed the Indian who again had resumed his flight into the forest. They had not advanced far, however, before Little Eagle again announced that he had discovered the presence of another camp. Again they successfully circled the place without being discovered, but when a third camp was found at a distance of a quarter of a mile, Ben's fears returned in full force.

"What does this mean?" he whispered to Little Eagle.

The young Indian's eyes snapped as he whispered in reply, "They go to fight."

"Where? What place are they going to attack?"

"The place you come from," answered Little Eagle.

"Farmers' Castle?" exclaimed Ben in a low voice.

The Indian nodded and did not speak.

"Do you know whether there are many others who will join these redskins?"

"Plenty warriors. Heap braves," answered Little Eagle proudly.

Ben was silent for a moment as he realized what the Indians were planning. Evidently the long-delayed attack upon Farmers' Castle was about to be made. He had himself been near the gathering warriors and the words of his guide now confirmed his worst fears. All through the winter there had been rumors of an attack upon the little garrison. From time to time prowling Indians had been discovered near the stockade. The death of several of the inmates also had increased the alarm, especially among the women and children who had fled to the Castle for shelter.

Many of the men had boldly asserted that no attack would be made, because the Indians seldom attacked a fortified place, particularly one as well fortified as was Farmers' Castle. Now, however, it was evident to the troubled boy that the Indians were preparing for a large and dangerous raid. How many there would

be in the forces it was difficult for him to estimate. Already he had seen the camps of three of these bands, each of which consisted of not less than twenty-five braves. Doubtless there were many more waiting to join them. Ben's fears increased greatly when he pictured to himself the great host which soon might be bearing down upon the inmates of Farmers' Castle.

CHAPTER XVIII

ASSEMBLING THE BRAVES

WHEN Ich and his brother in their little canoe swept swiftly toward the shore, they did so because they had discovered the presence there of two men, both of whom they thought were white. So eager was Ich to learn of any reports concerning his missing brother that he was counting upon obtaining information from any of the pioneers whom they might meet on their way.

His disappointment, however, was keen when he discovered that, although both men were whites, as he had thought, neither was known to him. The boys approached near the shore and in the conversation which followed they explained their purpose and eagerly inquired if they had heard any reports or rumors concerning the missing Ben. Neither of the men, however, had heard of any rumors of what had befallen the missing boy. Both were keenly aroused by reports they had received of the gathering of the Indians and of the plans

which Little Turtle was reported to be forming for driving the whites from the coveted region.

When the two men turned into the forest, Ich and Phineas at once resumed their labors and in a brief time had left far behind them the shore on which they had discovered the two men. For a time the brothers paddled in silence. Each was aware of the thoughts which filled the mind of the other and both were so eager that they did not relax their efforts. The little canoe sped swiftly forward, nor did a respite occur until once more they discovered two other men standing on the opposite bank of the river.

"Go slow, Phineas," warned Ich. "You don't know who they are."

"I don't care," replied Phineas quietly. "I'm going to hail every one we meet and find out if we can what has happened to Ben. Somebody must know and maybe we'll strike the one who has been told or knows something about it."

"All right, go ahead," responded Ich. "It won't be long before we'll find out whether these men have heard anything or not. I wanted to be sure, though, that they were white men before we got too near the shore."

When the boys drew near the spot where the

white men, evidently interested in the coming of the canoe, waited for their approach, they saw that one of the men at one time had been a resident at Farmers' Castle.

"Mr. Sawyer!" called Phineas quickly. "Have you heard anything about my brother?"

"Which one?" inquired Mr. Sawyer, as he recognized the boy before him.

"Ben," answered Phineas. "He has not reported at Farmers' Castle for a good while. We are afraid something has happened to him."

"Where did he go?"

"He went out with a party that was looking for some one of our men, and then, too, they were on the watch for signs of Indians."

"And Ben went?"

"Yes. Have you heard anything about him?"

"Not a word. Not a word," said Mr. Sawyer shaking his head. "And furthermore I think you won't hear anything. The Shawnees probably got him. They get anybody that dares to venture a mile from his clearing. I never saw such varmints. You can't head them off and you can't dodge them—"

"But you say you haven't heard anything about Ben?" interrupted Ich impatiently.

"That's what I said. Nary a word, and I

said I didn't think you would hear anything more than I did."

"We'll have to take our chances on that," said Ich quickly, as he and his brother resumed their paddling and speedily sent the little canoe beyond the sight of the men.

Once more the brothers toiled steadily at their task and swept swiftly over the surface of the river. The early morning light now clearly revealed the objects along the shore and both boys were keenly watching for the appearance of friend or foe. For a half-hour more they continued on their way but not another sight was obtained of any human being in the entire region.

At last, however, when they approached the bend in the stream, once more they saw standing on the shore two men who plainly were aware of their approach and were waiting for their coming.

"The men to-day all seem to be in pairs," said Ich in a low voice.

"So it seems," answered Phineas. "I don't care how many there are if we can only find some one who can tell us what has happened to Ben. It's a shame those men let him go as they did."

"According to the report," answered Ich, "there wasn't much else for him to do. He had

to vamoose and not stand on any order or wait for any one to tell him just what to do."

"That may be so," said Phineas quietly, "but I'm mighty interested in these men up on the shore. Do you know, I'm hoping that we shall hear something from them that will give us what we want."

"I don't know why we should," persisted Ich.

At the same time the younger brother was as keenly alert as Phineas and, as the little canoe sped swiftly toward the shore, Ich was becoming more excited as the men were more plainly seen. The lad was inclined to think at first that the strangers were Indians, inasmuch as their garb was that of the hunters and spies who dressed much as the red men did. Deerskin shirts and trousers and coonskin caps at one time were almost as popular in southern Ohio as they were in the regions farther south, and both of the men who were watching the approach of the canoe were dressed after this fashion.

When at last the boys abruptly stopped the canoe about fifty feet from the shore, they were aware that the men before them were both white and apparently were as eager to hail them as the boys had been to find the white men.

"What's new?" called one of the men.

"Not very much," answered Phineas.

"Have you heard that the Indians are getting together for an attack on Farmers' Castle?"

"That's the report."

"Have you heard anything this morning?"

"No. We left the Castle in the night. We're looking for our brother, Ben. He went out with a party that was sent to look after some men that were working on their places and had been reported as either killed or captured by the redskins. Some of them came back to Farmers' Castle and told us that Ben, that's our brother, was last seen trying to get away from a couple of Indians who were chasing him in a canoe."

The man laughed as he shook his head and said, "You aren't fools enough to think he got away, are you?"

"We don't now what to think," answered Phineas. "We know that Ben knows the country around here and he may have found a hiding place. If he did, it's just possible that he's there now and needs some help from home."

"He'll need the help all right," laughed the man. "No, sir, you'll never hear any more about him."

"If we don't, it won't be because we haven't

tried,'' retorted Phineas, angered at the levity of the man who could speak so lightly of the fate which might have befallen his missing brother.

Abruptly the boys resumed their task and the light canoe soon passed beyond the sight of the men whom they had seen on the shore. Another half hour elapsed and still there was no rest for the paddlers. There was no special reason why the early part of the day should be safer for them to travel in than the later hours, but the boys, as though moved by one purpose, were eager to cover the greatest possible distance in the early morning and thus be able to return more leisurely later in the day with an abundance of sunlight throughout their voyage back to Farmers' Castle.

The sun was now shining brightly and the day promised to be unusually warm.

''There won't be much snow left in a day or two if this sun keeps up,'' suggested Ich, as he wiped the perspiration from his brow. ''Whew, it's warm!''

''Yes,'' answered Phineas, ''the sun is warm but the air is still—''

Phineas stopped abruptly as he glanced toward the bank and Ich quickly followed his example. In a moment their excitement was keen when they discovered a canoe approach-

ing from the shore. In the little craft were two paddlers and it was evident from their activities that they were either trying to escape from unseen enemies on the shore or that they wanted to intercept Phineas and Ich before they passed farther up the stream.

As the canoe drew nearer, the attention and interest of Phineas and Ich was suddenly withdrawn from the approaching strangers. At that moment shots were fired from the shore and there were loud shouts which revealed the presence of Indians among the trees. The canoe in which the two brothers were paddling was struck in two places by the bullets of the enemy.

"Are you hit?" inquired Phineas anxiously as he glanced at his brother.

"No," answered Ich. "Are you?"

"No, but our canoe is, and it's in bad shape. It's going to fill before we can make the shore."

In response to the order of Phineas, Ich bent low and together the two boys exerted themselves as they had not done since they had left Farmers' Castle.

"Paddle hard!" called Phineas in a low voice. "Do your best. I'm afraid we shan't make it after all."

Meanwhile water was pouring in through the holes which had been made by the bullets. Al-

ready the canoe was becoming unmanageable and was settling low in the water.

"Keep your rifle dry, if you can," warned Phineas, who was keenly watching the shore for signs of the reappearance of their enemies.

The boys had placed their rifles athwart the gunwale and as yet the water had not touched them.

"We may have to swim," warned Phineas, as the canoe lurched and then settled more deeply into the river. "If we do, make for the island. If you can keep your rifle out of the water, do it. We may need it before long."

Ich glanced at the shore which now was not far away and was aware that they were approaching a long island. He had never before landed there and consequently was unfamiliar with the details of the locality, but any place now that promised to provide a hiding place would be a refuge not to be despised. Meanwhile both boys were exerting themselves to the utmost and the canoe was making progress although its speed steadily decreased. The bottom of the little craft was now covered with the inrushing water and it was a question how long the boys could hold the canoe upright.

The Indians had not reappeared upon the main shore but the silence was by no means evidence that they had disappeared. The canoe

was within ten feet of the shore when it suddenly lurched and, in spite of the efforts of the two boys, overturned. As they leaped into the water they discovered that it came only to their thighs. As a consequence they were able, by holding their guns above their heads, to prevent them from becoming wet and their powder which they carried in the horns slung over their shoulders was also untouched.

Hastily the two brothers scrambled ashore and as soon as they gained a foothold they both turned to look toward the bank where their enemies had appeared. Not one was to be seen.

"What's become of that canoe we saw?" inquired Ich in a low voice.

Phineas did not reply as he looked intently up and down the stream. Not a trace of the canoe, however, was discovered and, as the boys withdrew among the trees that covered the island, Phineas said, "I wonder who those fellows were!"

"Look yonder!" interrupted Ich quickly, as turning he pointed to the shore where the shots had been fired.

At least a score of Indians were to be seen running swiftly along the bank and apparently they were indifferent whether or not their presence was known. In a brief time, however,

the Indians disappeared within the woods and, although the boys remained watching ten minutes or more, they did not see them again.

"I am cold," suggested Ich. "I have been in the river but never when it was colder than it is now."

"March isn't the best month for swimming," said Phineas dryly. "Perhaps we'll get warm pretty soon."

"I don't see any prospects of our having a fire. We've lost our canoe and I don't know how we're going to get away, but we'll have to find a way or make one."

"I've been here before and unless I'm mistaken there's a little shanty about a hundred feet back among the trees. Let's see if we can find it."

"Some one ought to wait and keep watch of the shores. If the redskins have any canoes they may come over here. They certainly must have seen us."

"They did see us," interrupted Phineas. "Those bullet holes in the canoe show that they knew what they were doing. There's the shanty," he added, as he pointed to a small log hut directly in front of them.

The boys at once hastened to the place which they had no difficulty in entering. The walls were damp and chilly, however, and, although

they searched for flint and tinder, they were unable to discover any means by which they might kindle a fire.

"We'd better have some one on guard all the time, hadn't we?" inquired Ich.

"Yes, you go down to the shore," replied his brother. "Keep out of sight but let me know if you see any signs of any one coming over here. I'll look around here and see what can be done."

Ich obediently followed the directions of his brother and returning to the shore took a stand behind a large maple tree. From his position he was able to see far up and down the banks and was keenly watching for indications of the plans of the Indians who had fired upon them. An hour slowly passed and the vigil was becoming irksome to the active lad. The monotony of the scene was beginning to pall.

The river was high between the banks and the current was swifter than Ich had ever known it to be. As the shore he was watching apparently was no longer occupied by Indians, consequently there was no sign of life to be seen as far as he could look.

A few minutes later, however, Ich was startled when he beheld a canoe within a few feet of the shore of the island and coming down the stream. For a moment it seemed

to the startled boy that the Indians must have crossed farther up the river and silently and stealthily crept down the stream until they arrived at their present position without alarming any one on the island. A second look, however, enabled Ich to perceive that one at least of the occupants of the canoe was white and a moment later in great excitement he rushed down to the bank and shouted, "Ben! Ben! Come ashore!"

The two occupants of the canoe, one of whom Ich was convinced was a young Indian, instantly backed water and glanced hastily at the spot from which the unexpected hail had arisen.

"Is that you, Ich?" finally called Ben from the canoe.

"Yes, yes. Come ashore!"

The course of the little craft was instantly changed and a moment later Ben and Little Eagle stepped on shore. The surprise of each boy was keen, and for a moment they stared at each other as if each was doubtful of the other's reality.

"Where did you come from? How did you get here? Who is this young Indian with you?" demanded Ich.

"Tell me first," said Ben more quietly, "are you alone?"

"No, Phineas is here, too. We came out to

find if we could hear anything about you. We got as far as this when some Indians fired on us from the shore. They hit our canoe twice and it began to fill so we had to leave it and come ashore. Where did you get your canoe? I don't understand," added Ich as he gazed in confusion at his brother.

"It's a long story, Ich," said Ben. "If it hadn't been for Little Eagle here I never should have got away. I'll tell you all about it a little later. Just now what I want is something to eat. Have you got anything?"

"Not a thing. Come on back to the shanty where Phineas is and we'll talk it over."

Ben and Little Eagle first drew their canoe up on the bank of the stream and concealed it behind the giant trees. Then they followed Ich who led them directly to the hut in which Phineas was to be found.

The greeting between the brothers was warm and Ben was compelled to relate briefly the story of his escape from his captors and the help which the two Frenchmen had given him; and then, most of all, he praised Little Eagle who had conducted him safely through the forests.

"But how is everything at the Castle?" demanded Ben. "Is father all right? What's the news?"

"It isn't very good," said Phineas. "There are lots of reports that the Indians are getting together to attack the Castle."

"The reports are true," said Ben seriously. "We have passed a half dozen bands of Shawnees or Wyandottes and if it hadn't been for Little Eagle I know they would have got me again. It's plain that they are trying to get enough men together to make an attack on Farmers' Castle. We ought to get word there right away."

"We will," said Phineas, "though I don't think they need to know very much more than they do now to understand what they have got to face. It may be that we shall be kept here on the island so that we can't get away to carry the word we want to."

"We'll get away all right," said Ben confidently. "You've lost your canoe but we've got one. Little Eagle will make two or three trips to-night and carry us over to the main shore and then we can start for home."

Throughout the day the boys waited and watched for signs of the coming of their enemies but they were not molested. They were tired from their efforts and hungry but no food was to be had. They accepted the conditions philosophically, however, as most of the pioneers were compelled to do.

At last, when night fell, Little Eagle carried out the suggestion of Ben and by making two trips brought the three brothers safely to the main shore. There he bade them good-by, explaining that he must return to his own people.

It was not until long afterward that Ben learned the reason for the good will which Little Eagle had shown him and when he heard the tale he was more deeply impressed than before by the gratitude manifested by the Indian boy for the kindness which had been shown him by Phineas, when, one day, weeks before, he had rescued him when the Indian lad had fallen into a ravine and had badly sprained his left knee. The incident had almost passed from the recollection of Phineas and now when it was recalled he understood more clearly this trait of Indian character.

When at last near early morning the three brothers safely entered Farmers' Castle, the report which they brought of the plans of the prowling red men did not provide any real news for the inmates. Already they were greatly alarmed by the reports of the intended attack and were doing their utmost to strengthen their defense.

For several days their fears continued and Farmers' Castle was in a state bordering on panic. However, the threatened attack passed

when at last the inmates were convinced that the Indians had withdrawn abruptly from the immediate region. The cause of this sudden departure of the warriors was not understood until the events recorded in the chapter following were known to the pioneers.

The braves had assembled at the call of the chiefs and were soon prepared for the open warfare to be waged against the whites. Our boys had their full share in the contests—but their experiences there are not a part of this story. The defeat of General St. Clair's army, the disaster that befell General Harmar's troops, and the final triumph of Mad Anthony Wayne are related in another story. The more immediate events, however, are recorded in the historical chapter that follows.

CHAPTER XIX

CONCLUSION

[The conditions in Ohio during the times with which this story has to do are made so clear in one of the earlier histories of the state, written by Caleb Atwater and published in 1838, that the author has made the following quotation from that work.]

UNDER the authority of the act of Congress of 1791, Arthur St. Clair, Governor of the North West Territory, had been appointed Major General and Commander in Chief. He was empowered to treat with the Indian tribes; to be in fact a military, as well as civil, Governor of the Territory. President Washington did his duty faithfully; he appointed all the officers for the campaign, but the nation was poor and weak, especially in the west. Every exertion was made to raise an army and provide provisions and arms for it, and to concentrate it as early as possible in the season, but it was September before it was ready to march; nor was it even then completed in any respect as it deserved to be. It assembled at Fort Washington. On the 17th

day of September, 1791, the army left Fort Washington, and cut a road through the wilderness, to where Hamilton now stands. Here a fort was erected, and called Fort Hamilton. It was on the east bank of the Great Miami River, about twenty miles within the present limits of this state. Having completed this fort and garrisoned it, St. Clair marched some twenty miles northward and erected Fort St. Clair, and, marching twenty miles or more farther, due north, he established another military post, and called it Fort Jefferson.

It is some six miles south of the present town of Greenville in Darke County. Having garrisoned this post, on the 24th day of October, 1791, St. Clair's force was reduced to less than two thousand men with whom he marched in the direction of the Indian villages of the Maumee, which Indian towns it was his object to destroy. This march was slow, over a wet country, covered with a dense forest, which had to be cleared for his baggage wagons and artillery trains. The Indians began to hover about his army, and skirmishes became more and more frequent. To increase his difficulties, desertions took place daily, and, finally, sixty men deserted in a body, and started on their way to Cincinnati. St. Clair despatched Major Hamtramck with a suffi-

cient force to bring back those deserters and protect the provisions which were behind the army moving forward slowly. By this time, the main army was only fourteen hundred strong and moved forward to where, afterwards, Fort Recovery was erected, within the limits of Mercer County, or on the line, between it and Darke County.

Here, on the head waters of the Wabash River, among a number of small creeks, thirty feet in width, on the third day of November, 1791, Governor St. Clair, who was sick at the time, encamped with the remaining troops. The right wing of the army, under the command of General Butler, lay in front of a creek, twelve yards wide, and this force formed the first line. The second line, seventy yards behind the first, was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel William Darke. There were two rows of fires between these lines, and there was snow on the ground. The right flank was supposed to be protected by a small creek, with high steep banks, and a small body of troops. The left flank was covered by a body of cavalry and by piquets. The militia crossed the creek and advanced about eighty rods in front of the main army, and encamped in two lines, and they had two rows of logs on fire. When the militia crossed the creek in front of the regulars

a few Indians appeared, but they precipitately fled on the approach of the militia. At this place, St. Clair intended to have thrown up a breastwork, as soon as Hamtramck returned, with the baggage, while the main body of the army pressed forward to the Indian towns on the Maumee, leaving the baggage here, under Hamtramck's care. This he said, afterwards, was then his intention. About half an hour after daylight, immediately after the militia were dismissed from parade and roll call, they were attacked by the enemy, with the utmost fury. The militia fled, in an instant, and came running into the regulars' camp, and spread terror and confusion where they ran. These flying militia rushed quite through Butler's line and were hardly stopped by the second line of regulars. The officers exerted themselves to the utmost to restore order which, though, was not entirely done. The Indians pressed close upon the very heels of the flying militia and instantly engaged Butler's command with great intrepidity and fury. The action forthwith became warm, and the enemy, passing round the first line within fifteen minutes after the first attack, the whole army was surrounded by the Indians. The artillery was posted in the center of each wing which the enemy attacked with the greatest violence, mowing down

the artillerists in great numbers. The enemy fired from the ground and from every tree around, and were seen only when flying from covert to covert. At length the enemy boldly marched up to the very mouths of the cannon, and fought with the daring courage of men whose trade is war, and who are impelled to vigorous actions by all the motives which operate on the savage mind. It was soon perceived that, while our soldiers were falling every moment before the bullets of the enemy, yet, hidden as that enemy was, little impression was made on the Indians. It was then resolved that Lieutenant Colonel Darke should charge the enemy with the bayonet, at the head of the second line, which he commanded. This charge was made by nearly all that line with the utmost fury, and with so much effect that the Indians were driven about thirty rods; but no sooner had Darke returned to his position than the Indians were there also; this was owing to a want of riflemen to press the advantage which Darke had obtained by driving off the enemy.

Instantly after this charge, General Butler was mortally wounded, the right wing was broken, the artillerists were nearly all killed, the guns were taken by the enemy, and the camp was everywhere penetrated by the fero-

cious warriors. Major Butler, though his leg was broken by a ball, mounted his horse, and bravely led his battalion to the charge. Majors Darke and Clarke also led theirs to the charge. They charged the enemy with the bayonet, drove the Indians out of the camp, and restored the guns. But while the Indians were pressed with the bayonet at one point, they kept up their continual fire from every other point, with fatal effect. Every charge when made drove the enemy back at the point where it was made, but no general effect was produced on the enemy. Instead of keeping their ranks and fighting, the troops huddled together in crowds, about the fires, and were shot down, without resistance. The officers did their duty bravely, and were shot down in great numbers by the enemy who took a sure and fatal aim at them. The Indians always shoot at the officers.

All this time, St. Clair was so worn down by fatigue and disease, gout and rheumatism, that he was not able to mount or dismount his horse, without assistance.

All that now remained to be done was to bring off the remains of the army. General St. Clair ordered Lieutenant Colonel William Darke, with the second regiment, to clear away the enemy from the path in which the army had marched to the spot where they were fighting,

and he ordered Major Clarke to cover the rear of the army. These orders were obeyed, and a most disorderly flight commenced and continued for about four miles. It was ten o'clock in the forenoon. All this time, the carnage was dreadful. Our soldiers finally threw away their arms, and fled for their lives.

Many were killed in the fight, tomahawked and scalped; many were captured and afterwards roasted alive, at the stake. The elder Caray Maunee, of the Winnebagoes, was there, and informed us of all the particulars, when we were at Prairie du Chien, in July, 1829.

After glutting their savage vengeance by killing many of our men; and, having taken as many prisoners as they could well manage, the Indians left off their pursuit, and returned to the battle ground. There lay the dying and the dead; there stood the artillery and trains; and there also stood the baggage wagons. Here the enemy now glutted his vengeance to the very utmost, on the dying, the dead, and the living. But we leave the horrid picture for some other to fill up.

The troops that remained of the fourteen hundred men of the morning, at early dawn, fled to Fort Jefferson, a distance of thirty miles or more.

In this most unfortunate battle, we lost thirty-eight commissioned officers, who were killed on the battle ground. Six hundred non-commissioned officers and private soldiers were either killed or missing. Twenty-one commissioned officers were wounded, not a few of whom died of their wounds. Two hundred and forty-two noncommissioned officers and privates were wounded, many of whom also died of their wounds. Among the dead were General Butler and Major Ferguson, two brave officers, who had served with great distinction, through the whole of the Revolutionary war. General Butler's death was justly and severely lamented by the whole nation as an irreparable loss. In the list of those who shared his fate were many who had participated largely, in the toils, dangers and glory of the war of the Revolution. They fell nobly doing their duty to their country; they rest in honor, and deserve our gratitude.

At the head of a list of the wounded, stood the names of Lieutenant Colonels Thomas Gibson and William Darke, Major Butler and Adjutant General Sargent, all of whom were veteran officers, of great merit, and who had behaved with distinguished gallantry in this disastrous battle. General St. Clair thought that he had been overwhelmed by numbers, be-

cause he was attacked, on all sides, by the enemy, though, from all the sources of information in our power, we presume the numbers of the two armies were about equal. The Indian loss, it is presumed, was small compared to ours.

We close our account of this disastrous defeat by saying that the first line of the second regiment, as encamped, was commanded by General Richard Butler, Patterson and Clarke. The second line was commanded by Gaither, Bedinger and Darke. Of the first line, all the officers were either killed or wounded, except three, and of the artillerists, all were killed except four privates!

Of the regulars, the following officers were killed: General Richard Butler, Ferguson, Bradford, Spear, Ford, Morgan, Bines, Butts, Hart, Kirkwood, McCrea, Thompson, Phelon, Warren, Balsh, Newman, Kelso, McMickle, Purdy, Anderson, Lukens, Burgess, Crawford, Moorehead, Cribbs, Smith, Piatt, Van Swaringen, Tipton, McMath, Reeves, Doyle, Brooks, Greyton, Cummings, Beatty, and Doctors Chase and Beatty.

Wounded officers of the regulars were as follows: Lieutenant Colonel George Gibson, Major Thomas Butler, Captain Price, Colonel Sargent, Captain Darke, Buchanan, Lysle,

Boyd, Trueman, Malartie, Cobb, Wilson, Ensign Purdy, Lieutenant Colonel Darke, and others.

The militia killed were Oldham, Lemon, Briggs and Montgomery; wounded, Captain Thomas, Captain Madison, Lieutenant Stagner, Lieutenant Owens, Lieutenant Walters and Lieutenant Gano.

The fugitives arrived at Fort Jefferson about sunset, and continued their march that night at ten o'clock. The ground was covered with snow two or three inches deep. They marched to Fort Washington, by way of Fort Hamilton. Before the troops began their march, a large number of the sentinels of Fort Jefferson deserted and fled,—such was their terror at what they had heard of this dreadful disaster. The march was a very disorderly one from Fort Jefferson to Fort Washington.

There were in the army, at the commencement of the action, about two hundred and fifty women, of whom fifty-six were killed in the battle, and the remainder were made prisoners by the enemy, except a small number who reached Fort Washington. One of the survivors lived until recently in Cincinnati—a Mrs. Catharine Miller. This woman ran ahead of the whole army in their flight from

the field of battle. Her large quantity of long red hair floated in the breeze, and the soldiers followed her through the woods, as their *forerunner* who moved rapidly onward to the place of their ultimate destination.

On reaching Fort Jefferson, General St. Clair met Hamtramck, with the first regiment, whom we have mentioned as having been ordered to bring back the deserters and protect the provisions and heavy baggage wagons which had been left slowly making their way along in the rear of the army.

A council of war decided that they would not return to the battle ground, so, leaving the wounded in Fort Jefferson, St. Clair, with a mere remnant of his army, returned to Fort Washington.

While Congress was in session at Philadelphia, early in December, President Washington received the official account of this most calamitous battle of the 4th of November, which information was forthwith communicated by him to the national legislature. Nothing could have been more unexpected than this disaster. The public mind was exasperated to a high degree against St. Clair, but, for want of officers of a rank high enough to try him, no court martial could be or was called upon his conduct. Late in the session of 1792, Congress

appointed a committee to inquire into it, but that civil committee acquitted him.

The Indian war now assumed a serious aspect, and the reputation of the nation required to be retrieved from the disgrace it had sustained. The whole western frontier lay exposed to fresh inroads of the enemy, now flushed with so dreadful a victory.

General Washington wished to have Congress give him authority to raise three additional regiments of foot, and a squadron of horse, for three years, unless peace should be sooner made with the Indians. A bill containing these provisions was introduced into the House of Representatives, but it met with great opposition there. It was objected that the nation had not the money to carry on the war on such a scale; that while the British held the western posts, we were not able to protect so large a frontier; that, by withdrawing from the North West Territory and making the Ohio River the boundary, and, by treating with the Indians, a peace might be restored to this frontier.

Such were some of the reasons assigned by the opposition to General Washington, in Congress. They strove with all their might to defeat the bill, for the defense of the North West Territory.

Those who supported the measure urged the necessity of self-defense and self-preservation; they presented to Congress a picture of the bleeding frontier—and they proved that not less than fifteen hundred Kentuckians, men, women and children, who were peaceably pursuing their avocations, had been either slain or carried into captivity by the enemy, within the last seven years; and it was not doubted that the frontier settlements of Pennsylvania and Virginia had suffered quite as much within the same period of time. The measures of General Washington, they said, had always been conciliatory towards the savages. It was shown that Harmar offered to treat with the savages in the villages of the Maumee River, but the Indians at first refused to treat and then asked for thirty days to consider the subject, which was granted. This was in the summer of 1790 and, at the end of the thirty days, the savages refused to give any answer to the proposals to treat. In that same thirty days, however, while Harmar forbore all hostilities by the express orders of General Washington to that effect, the Indians had either killed or captured one hundred and twenty persons on our frontiers. Many of the prisoners had been roasted alive by a slow fire.

CONCLUSION

The bill was passed and became a law. St. Clair resigned his military command, and General Anthony Wayne was appointed Commander in Chief. This was in the spring of 1793.

(1)

THE END

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